

Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Plan



FINAL REPORT

February 23, 2020

Prepared for:

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Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation

FHWA Recreational Trails Program for Louisiana

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Executive Summary

Louisiana residents, as well as visitors to the state, use recreational trails of all kinds for fun, exercise, daily transportation, to access natural, cultural, and economic resources, and more. Since 1993, Louisiana has been building a network of trails for all kinds of users—people walking, running, bicycling, skating, riding horses, motorbikes, or ATVs, paddling watercraft, and more, in cities, towns, rural areas, forests, swamps, and beyond—through the implementation of the FHWA Recreational Trails Program (LRTP) for Louisiana. This strategic plan for the LRTP includes a review of program outcomes to date and summarizes results of best practice research and stakeholder outreach about program successes and challenges, trail priorities, and implementation barriers and opportunities across the state.

In addition to meeting residents' needs for various kinds of outdoor recreation, trails can support increased physical activity, growth of vibrant local economies, preservation of culturally, historically, and ecologically significant areas, protection of wildlife and habitat, and overall improved accessibility and resilience for the communities they connect and impact.

The LRTP, a federal-aid assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is intended to support the development and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized users and has supported nearly 400 trails projects in Louisiana over the last 26 years, greatly expanding the state's inventory of motorized and non-motorized trails (including paddle trails) and supporting increased access to healthy lifestyles, economic opportunity, and outdoor recreation opportunities in all regions.

However, trail access, as well as trail needs and concerns, vary from community to community and survey respondents indicate numerous opportunities to expand trail access, to better connect trail networks to surrounding communities, to maintain and repair existing trails, and to provide better information about Louisiana's trail system and promote its use to all residents and visitors to the state, among other priorities. Statewide, the protection of natural features and habitats, expansion of trail networks, and maintenance of existing facilities are of primary importance, but specific needs differ from region to region, and among stakeholder groups and trail user types.

This plan includes goals, measurable objectives, and implementable strategies and actions recommended to guide Louisiana's RTP into the next decade. These actions are intended to better understand and balance local, regional, and statewide needs and support improved accessibility and connectivity of communities, maximize active transportation and public health impacts, harness economic and environmental benefits, improve data quality and availability, and expand public engagement with and use of Louisiana trails, ensuring continued, equitable expansion of access to high-quality recreational and transportation opportunities for trail users of all types, and of all ages and abilities, across the state.

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Preface

The subject of this research and plan, the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), is an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The federal RTP provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trails-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trails uses.¹

RTP applies the “user-pay/user-benefit” philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), returning federal tax on fuel used for non-highway recreation to the States for trails projects. Program implementation is consistent in practice with other expenditures from the Highway Trust Fund. Although the gas tax supporting the HTF is paid primarily by gas-using vehicles, resources are shared with other users of recreational trails for non-motorized trails to develop a balanced system and to increase the RTP's political support beyond off-road vehicle users.²

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). Most recently, the RTP was reauthorized as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which covers Fiscal Years 2016 through 2020 and was signed by President Obama on December 4, 2015.³

During Federal Fiscal Year 2009, the last year of SAFETEA-LU, States received slightly more than \$84 million in RTP funds, the same annual maximum approved under MAP-21 and now the FAST Act. Louisiana has received \$1,517,643 annually since 2009 for its RTP.⁴

Since 1991, more than 22,000 RTP-funded projects have been documented nationwide with details for each state available on the RTP database: www.recreationaltrailsinfo.org.⁵ In every parish and in hundreds of municipalities, communities and neighborhoods across Louisiana, there is, at least, one LRTP project. In Louisiana, our projects serve all urban, suburban and rural areas with every Louisiana citizen living only a short distance from, at least, one of our projects.

The RTP has become the foundation for state trails programs across the country. It leverages hundreds of millions of dollars of additional support from other sources for trails, encourages productive cooperation among trail users, and facilitates healthy outdoor recreation and associated, badly needed economic activity in countless communities.⁶

From its operational beginning in the mid 1990's until the FAST Act was passed in 2015, the RTP was often on the verge of being unfunded by the US Congress. During the 2012 MAP-21 legislative process, RTP went from the verge of elimination to becoming the only named set-aside in the new

¹ The American Trails Website and the FHWA.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) category due to the newly engaged strong support of the motorized stakeholders of the RTP coming together with the ubiquitous, traditional non-motorized base of supporters. Furthermore, at this time, RTP enjoys substantial bipartisan support as the importance of trails for transportation as well as recreation becomes more and more obvious.

In December of 2006, the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program (LRTP) was in total disarray and on the verge of being cancelled by the federal government, which was the sole funding authority. Due to the devastation of the 2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the lack of a full-time state trails administrator for over a full year, more than one hundred LRTP projects were stalled for one reason or another throughout Louisiana.

Making the situation worse, there were no motorized trails applications received by LRTP in 2006. Therefore, we could not award the non-motorized trails grants until we came up with enough motorized trails applications to cover, at least, 30% of the annual LRTP apportionment for 2006. Thus, the state program was frozen until we came up with the minimum requirement of 30% by federal law for motorized Recreational Trails Program projects.

This was the state of affairs when I became the state trails administrator for the Louisiana RTP in the second week of December of 2006. At that time, LRTP was housed in the Louisiana Governor's Office and the administrator position was an unclassified (political) gubernatorial appointment. I was hired by Sam Jones of Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's administration with the mission of righting the Recreational Trails Program in our state.

Through Jones' leadership and with the immediate help and support of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Plaquemines Parish Government, and a year later from the National Forest Service, the Breezyhill Dirt Riders Club, the South Louisiana Trailblazers and the Louisiana Trail, we were able to re-establish our LRTP advisory committee and recruit enough motorized trails partners to keep us in compliance with federal regulations for the foreseeable future. And by January of 2008, all of the old projects and the newly awarded ones, as well, were active and on their way to completion.

Governor Bobby Jindal took office on January 14, 2008. Almost immediately, with his fifth executive order, Jindal, a Republican, moved the LRTP out of the Governor's Office and into the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT), Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation, which was under the direction of Democratic Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu at the time. With this bureaucratic restructuring, the LRTP was protected from partisan political influence and the LRTP Administrator position became a classified civil service one.⁷ And today, three lieutenant governors later, LRTP remains in DCRT now under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser, the 2017 American Trails Advocate Award winner for Louisiana.

Prior to becoming Lieutenant Governor and as president of Plaquemines Parish Government, Billy planned, designed, funded (with support from the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program), and built two motorized parks within his parish, which is in the Greater New Orleans area. These two public facilities were the first and, to this day, only motorized trails facilities in Louisiana that are owned and operated

⁷ This governmental restructuring was pursued and accomplished by DCRT Assistant Secretary Stuart Johnson (in concert with Governor Jindal's office) at the recommendation and urging of Grover Cleveland Hardman III, Director of Outdoor Recreation, Office of State Parks and RTP Advisory Committee board member. Both are retired now.

by a local government. In 2015, he also worked to establish and support a non-motorized trails facility for hiking and horseback riding in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Over the last several years, I have become very active in the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT)⁸, as the board member representing NASTA (National Association of State Trails Administrators for RTP). At present, RTP only receives 30% of the federal fuel taxes from off road fuel sales. CRT is in the process of asking Congress to fully fund RTP in the next federal transportation bill, with all of the federally collected funds going to the RTP. If this proposal were to come to fruition, RTP spending would increase nationally from \$84 million to \$280 million and in Louisiana from \$1.5 million to \$5 million.

In Louisiana, instead of doing only about twelve to sixteen projects a year, we could do twice that amount of projects while raising the minimum amount spent on each significantly as well. This would fully fund all of the excellent projects that we receive each year instead of only about half of them.

As we move Louisiana RTP forward in accordance with the findings and recommendations of this research and plan, I fully support and recommend the increased funding by both federal and state sources and advocate for the compilation of a Louisiana trails database.

Of all public works projects, trails, including all pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, are the easiest and least expensive both to build and maintain.

So we will continue to lead the way in making Louisiana and all of its communities more walkable and bikeable, because that is what people everywhere want.

Merci beaucoup. Que Dieu bénisse le peuple de la Louisiane et les habitants du reste du monde qui ne sont pas la chance de vivre dans notre état.

Michael W. Domingue
FHWA Recreational Trails Program Administrator for Louisiana

⁸ The **Coalition for Recreational Trails** (CRT) is a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations. Its members work together to build awareness and understanding of the Recreational Trails Program, which returns federal gasoline taxes paid by off-highway recreationists to the states for trail development and maintenance. CRT was formed in 1992 following the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to ensure that the National Recreational Trails Fund (now known as the Recreational Trails Program or RTP) established by that legislation received adequate funding. See the American Trails Website.

Introduction

For thousands of Louisiana residents and visitors, recreational trails around the state represent an opportunity to get out into and enjoy nature, exercise, hunt or fish, birdwatch, connect to local parks, schools, or jobs, and experience the bounty and diversity of natural resources, ecosystems, and wildlife the state has to offer. Since 1993, Louisiana has been building a network of trails for all kinds of users—people walking, running, bicycling, skating, riding horses, riding motorbikes or ATVs, paddling watercraft, and more, in cities, towns, rural areas, forests, swamps, and beyond—through the implementation of the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program.

This study and resulting document were intended to gather information and recommendations to guide the LRTP (and other entities involved in management or planning of motorized and non-motorized trails) and aid in guiding prioritization of trails-related funds in order to achieve statewide goals and address local and regional needs. The Strategic Plan for the LRTP is intended to promote understanding of these needs, and recommended actions to address them, and to support improvements and expansions to trail routes and networks for all users. Moreover, it is intended to support trail advocacy, management, and promotion statewide.

This plan draws on feedback collected through two targeted statewide surveys for trail users and agency/organization stakeholders conducted in summer 2018 as well as an analysis of program implementation to date based on LRTP records and research into national trends and best practices. The plan aims to provide recommendations that are consistent with the needs of Louisiana residents of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities, as well as land managers and local and state agencies involved in trail planning, development, construction, operations, and/or programming, as well as to recommend actions that encourage trail use while supporting effective stewardship of wildlife, habitats, and other natural resources.

Today, the state of Louisiana has the opportunity to build on successful past projects and proactively link its trails to one another and to nearby communities, while addressing a variety of transportation and recreation needs, through strategic implementation of its Recreational Trails Program, as well as through coordinated implementation of related plans, programs, and funds. This plan provides insight into the LRTP's successes to date, present needs and challenges, and priority actions to advance progress toward development of outdoor recreational opportunities and trails networks statewide.

Benefits of Trails

The benefits of trail facilities are myriad and well documented. In addition to meeting needs for various kinds of outdoor recreation, trails have been shown to increase physical activity and support positive physical and mental health outcomes (and subsequently reduced societal costs),⁹ support the economic growth and vitality of surrounding communities,¹⁰ preserve culturally or historically significant areas, encourage and facilitate use of active modes of transportation, and provide ecological and conservation benefits to sensitive wildlife and habitat by preserving open spaces by creating uninterrupted natural corridors that support a high diversity of species and migration activities, and more.¹¹

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *The Guide to Community Preventive Services*, <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>

¹⁰ Rails to Trails Conservancy, *From Trail Towns to TrOD: Trails and Economic Development*, <https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=4620>

¹¹ Federal Highway Administration, *2016 Recreational Trails Program Annual Report FHWA-HEP-17-001* https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/overview/report/2016/report_2016.pdf

Though many are difficult to conclusively quantify, some of the identified potential benefits of trails to communities and regions include:

- Increased community accessibility
- Active transportation benefits, transportation choice, and resilience
- Climate/hazard mitigation
- Workforce development
- Safer, more livable communities
- Environmental education and awareness
- Sense of connection with nature and community
- Improved mental health
- Opportunities for education
- Improved air and water quality (reduced emissions, buffer zones, etc.)
- Contributions to wetland preservation

Moreover, high-quality trails (especially longer distance ones) that provide access to the state's many natural assets and resources can draw tourists from other states and countries seeking recreational experiences including hiking and backpacking, bicycling, paddling, fishing, hunting, birdwatching, geocaching, and more. Trails also provide essential access for land managers, researchers, and others involved in understanding and preserving our state's natural resources.

Above all, trails can provide diverse recreational opportunities allowing Louisiana residents to experience and enjoy a range of landscapes and settings, as well as opportunities for tourism, economic development, and connections among communities. They can provide enhanced health and mobility options for children and seniors, offer a low-cost way for residents to commute to work, and create opportunities to learn about and appreciate natural resources and ecological issues that impact wildlife, habitat, and the future of Louisiana as a place to live, work, and play.

About the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program

The LRTP is a federal-aid assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), intended to support the development and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized users. According to the federal legislation that establishes this program, the definition of a recreational trail is: "a track or route used for recreation." So, LRTP trails range widely from paved urban greenways to facilities in rural or natural areas to snow or water routes where applicable. Eligible recreational activities include walking (including wheelchair use), hiking, skating, skateboarding, equestrian activities, skiing, bicycling, water activities (e.g. paddling), all-terrain vehicle riding, motorcycling, snowmobiling, and use of other off-road motorized vehicles.

The Recreational Trails Program, initially funded by the National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRFTA) of 1991 and reauthorized through subsequent transportation funding bills (including Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act for FY 2016-2020), has distributed over \$1 billion of revenues generated from the sale of motor fuel used for off-highway recreational purposes. The program is administered at the national level by the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in consultation with the US Department of the Interior.

Each state receives funds according to a statutory formula and is tasked with administering the program, establishing a State Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee, and developing project solicitation and selection procedures. The FHWA Recreational Trails Program for Louisiana (FRTPL) is administered by the Lieutenant Governor's Office/Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation, Recreational Trails Program with assistance from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The Recreational Trails Program funds eight general categories of permissible uses for funds:

- Construction of new recreational trails
- Non-routine trail maintenance or restoration, including relocation
- Trailhead/trailside facilities
- Construction and maintenance equipment
- Acquisition of trail corridors (easements or fee simple title)
- Assessment of trail conditions (e.g. surveying, inspection)
- Safety and environmental education
- Program administration (up to 7%)

A minimum of 30% of funds must be allocated for projects pertaining to motorized recreation, and 30% for non-motorized recreation, with the remaining 40% to be allocated at the discretion of the program administrator and Advisory Committee, in accordance with federal guidelines.

The Louisiana Recreational Trails Program is overseen by an advisory committee which convenes regularly (at least, once per federal fiscal year) to identify and discuss major trail issues for the state, and is comprised of trail users, local, state, and federal agency representatives, and non-profit stakeholders, including:

- FHWA
- National Park Service
- US Forest Service
- Louisiana Paddlers
- Plaquemines Parish Off-Road Committee
- Transportation Recreation Activities in Louisiana (TRAIL)
- LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- LA Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
- New Orleans Mountain Biking Organization
- LA Department of Transportation and Development
- South Louisiana Trailblazers
- Louisiana Equine Council

Louisiana's RTP encourages "trail projects that work in partnership with trail-user groups, volunteer groups, the business community, AmeriCorps, tribal entities, and local, state, and federal agencies to develop projects that benefit the various modes of trail uses in a safe and satisfying manner with an

emphasis on public health and active transportation,”¹² in recognition of the potential co-benefits of investments in recreational trails facilities on health and connectivity outcomes for communities.

Any non-profit or governmental entity may apply for funds, as may certain commercial entities. Grants can range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 for non-motorized trail projects, and from \$20,000 to \$159,000 for motorized trail projects, and may include funding for educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection and/or support Youth Service and Conservation Corps organizations. Federal RTP funds can cover up to 80 percent of total project costs (reimbursable), with a required 20 percent minimum local match.

Louisiana’s RTP explicitly recommends developing trail projects that safely meet the needs of a variety of trail users, support ADA-compliant trail access, address an identified need as described in the current Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) or a local plan, and which are “shovel-ready” for efficient project completion. Applicants must demonstrate support of relevant land owners/managers and local government, and should demonstrate a commitment to environmental sensitivity and capacity for long-term maintenance and access, among other considerations. Projects are expected to be completed within one year of the signature of the Letter of Commitment Agreement, and selected projects must be submitted by LRTP to DOTD for environmental clearance and the FHWA for funding approval.

Strategic Plan Purpose

The goal of this strategic planning process was to provide a comprehensive review of LRTP outcomes to date and collect stakeholder and public input to inform and guide future LRTP implementation, with the overall goal of developing integrated trail networks and increasing trail access for all user types across Louisiana for the next ten years, in alignment with guidance from the FHWA and in conjunction with future updates to Louisiana’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Through this planning process, the LRTP seeks to balance the needs of trail users, protect and preserve natural resources, identify priorities for existing and new trails, and recommend strategies and actions for meeting present and anticipated needs across the state.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan document is to serve as a planning resource for the Louisiana RTP as well as local and state agency partners, advocates, and other parties who share the goal of providing Louisiana residents and visitors with high-quality trails experiences.

Methodology

This evaluation and planning process included the following key components:

1. A review of Recreational Trails Program implementation and outcomes to date, including:
 - A review of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCT) 2014 - 2019 Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) as relates to trails and trails facilities.

¹²Louisiana RTP 2018 Grant Application, https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/Parks/grants/RTPL/RecTrailsGrantApp_2018.pdf?Recreational+Trails%2C+Grants

- Compilation and synthesis of all LRTP projects to date, including spatial data, key contacts, local plans, and outcomes identified.
 - Review of other states' RTP plans and related materials and synthesis of best practices for trails planning and RTP implementation, including those pertaining to coastal planning, restoration, and protection projects, as well as any local, regional, and/or state plans which directly relate to trails planning or implementation.
2. Stakeholder outreach
 - A draft database of trail users (organizations, groups, clubs, etc) and stakeholders (local governments, state and federal facilities, planners, businesses, interest groups) for motorized and non-motorized trails was developed.
 - Two surveys were conducted via open-link online survey distributed to the above referenced databases in July/August 2018, resulting in nearly 1000 completed responses from trail users of all kinds from all over the state, from ATV riders to mountain bikers to paddlers to birdwatchers, as well as stakeholders directly involved in trails planning, implementation, and operations. Respondents to these surveys provided insight about what Louisianans love about the trails in their communities and around the state and how they use them, as well as what residents would like to see more of or improvements to in years to come, including funding priorities, implementation barriers, opportunities for program enhancement, and external funding source ideas.
 3. Identification of key findings and issues & generation of recommendations
 - Based on the best practice research and stakeholder findings, draft goals, objectives, and actions are presented for consideration for the next ten years of LRTP implementation and inclusion in the 2020-2024 SCORP.
 4. Trails Access and Equity Analysis
 - Finally, a preliminary spatial database of LRTP trails was developed and detailed spatial analysis of statewide trails access and the demographic characteristics of surrounding communities was conducted in order to identify areas of opportunity and concern, data gaps, and implications for project prioritization

LRTP Implementation Review

This section summarizes the context and outcomes to date of the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program since its inception in 1993, through projects awarded in 2017, including trails-related priorities identified in the Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan as well as other state and local plans pertaining to trails and trails-related facilities, an inventory and evaluation of LRTP projects awarded, a review of national trends and best practices in statewide trails planning, and an assessment of opportunities and challenges in integrating trails planning with concurrent ecological/coastal restoration efforts in Louisiana.

Louisiana SCORP

Trails projects selected for funding should align with specific trails-related goals in the [Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#), or a local or regional strategic and/or comprehensive plan. The SCORP, which guides statewide actions and investments in outdoor recreation

opportunities, identifies trails development as one of the state’s top priorities, including all types of trails in a variety of potential contexts.

The overall objectives of the Louisiana SCORP, a plan updated every five years as required by the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, are to identify available outdoor recreation infrastructure, identify outdoor recreation priorities and trends, evaluate unfilled infrastructure needs to address those priorities and trends, prioritize plans for future development, and identify required actions to provide for outdoor recreation priorities throughout the state. The current plan (2014-2019) was developed through a public process of stakeholder meetings, telephone and online surveys, etc., and found that both paved and unpaved trails and water access, as well as promoting active lifestyles, are key priorities for Louisiana residents.

Overall, trails were identified as the top SCORP priority for the 2014-2020 period, including “paved and unpaved multi-use trails with an emphasis on connecting residential areas with outdoor recreation facilities and natural resources to facilitate non-motorized, accessible travel to destinations.” Public access to water was identified as the second highest priority, including kayak/canoe/pirogue trails. The SCORP looked at park access, but there was no comprehensive map of trails facilities by which to evaluate access and equity considerations. The need for better information about the locations of trails, sidewalks, tracks or other transportation-related paths was noted. However, using limited and proxy data, the evaluation found that 79% of the state’s population is within five miles of a location where they can walk or hike on a trails facility, and 95% is within 10 miles.

Other strategies and actions identified in the SCORP which pertain directly to trails planning and development include:

- Building a GIS database that includes trails GIS data for trails of all types. The SCORP identifies a need for a standardized data format and outreach process for systematically collecting this data, particularly prioritizing LWCF-funded projects
- Assessing connectivity gaps and conducting Level of Service analysis for recreational opportunities, including trails
- Developing a user-generated data collection system
- Promoting existing recreational facilities and trails
- Building a database of advocates
- Collecting more details about trails types and details via a trails user survey
- Conducting a trails workshop and forming a statewide trails committee
- Providing technical assistance for local jurisdictions to guide pedestrian and bicycle facility development
- Encouraging volunteerism (i.e., “friends of” groups)
- Addressing aging infrastructure
- Targeting water-based projects

The SCORP process revealed that stakeholders in regions of the state have identified particular needs specific to their respective areas. As pertains to trails, the Baton Rouge region, for example, identified a need to involve and target youth through new organizational partnerships, more trails that cater to senior citizens, and improved separation of ATVs from “quiet recreation” activities within the planning area. In New Orleans, improved lighting on trails was cited as a key need, as was increased access to water (potentially including both paddle trails and water-adjacent land-based trails facilities). In Shreveport, a specific need to connect trails to parks was identified.

State and Local Planning Context

Although there has never previously been a statewide plan focused specifically on trails, a variety of local and regional entities around the state have developed plans which pertain to trails and/or active transportation more generally. In addition, the state Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has developed a Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master plan which discusses the importance of improving access to walking and bicycling for both transportation and recreation, with the benefits to economic development and public health cited as primary justifications for infrastructure investment. In particular, the state plan highlights rails-to-trails conversions, like the Tammany Trace, as key state assets.

A growing number of municipalities, parishes, and metro regions have developed, or are in the process of developing, pedestrian and/or bicycle master plans, including the following:

- [Alexandria/Pineville Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#) (2017)
- [New Orleans Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#) (2014)
- [Baton Rouge Bicycle & Pedestrian Master + Safety Action Plan](#) (*in progress*)
- [St. Charles Parish Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan](#) (*in progress*)
- [Shreveport-Caddo Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) (2016)
- [St. Bernard Parish Bikeway & Pedestrian Plan Update](#) (2017)
- [Hammond Bicycle Master Plan](#) (2018)
- [Lake Charles Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan](#) (2012)
- [Lafayette MPO 2035 Bikeway Plan](#) (2015)
- [Lafayette 2035 MPO Pedestrian Plan](#) (2015)
- [Jefferson Parish Master Bicycle Plan](#) (2013)
- [South Central Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#) (2013)

These tend to describe the need for a variety of facility types for people walking and bicycling for both recreation and transportation. Many regions focus heavily on trails (either existing or envisioned) as key, versatile axes of their active transportation networks, particularly those that connect to key community destinations and/or neighboring communities. A desire to link these facilities into existing and planned on-street pedestrian and bicycle networks is also commonly identified. Plans vary in how they intend to fund plan implementation, but nearly all cite the LRTP as one of the primary potential sources.

In addition, plans specific to envisioned trails facilities and/or corridors, such as the [Lafourche Parish Multiuse Path Master Plan and Feasibility Study \(2016\)](#), provide a detailed guide for phased implementation of major trail projects expected to have a transformative effect on the communities they link. This, and other local and regional plans, focus heavily on the opportunity to leverage waterway assets, including levee structures, for environmental, recreational, and economic benefit.

In terms of motorized trails planning, no adopted local or regional plans were identified, however, the [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Master Plan for Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges \(2014\)](#) details each WMA's facilities, public access points and policies, and permitted public uses, including existing and planned trails and trails facilities (both designated nature trails and ATV/UTV trails). This plan notes the importance of coastal and inland birding trails as a key opportunity for tourism diversification, education, and conservation and notes the need to prioritize infrastructure serving these uses. In addition, the WMA plan documents the opportunity to use urban refuges for educational purposes, and cites issues inherent to private ownership of WMAs as a potential threat to ongoing access and conservation of these lands. Additional summary information about local and regional active transportation and trails plans can be found in Appendix A.

Project Inventory

As of April 2019, the Louisiana RTP had awarded approximately \$27 million in grants for over 450 trails projects since 1993 in all of Louisiana's 64 parishes and including several multi-parish and/or statewide grants. The largest number and dollar value of LRTP awards has gone to East Baton Rouge Parish (Figure 1). Most parishes (95%) have received grants supporting non-motorized trails, while approximately 40% of the state's parishes have received funds for motorized trails projects. A much smaller share (9%) have received awards pertaining to paddle trails, although navigable waterways (and thus, potential trail opportunities) abound statewide (Figure 2).

Evaluated by State Planning Region (Figures 3 and 4), LRTP investments have overall aligned roughly with the share of the state's population residing in each region, with more populous, urbanized regions receiving slightly less on a per capita basis than smaller regions of the state (Figure 5), with the exception of Planning Region 5, which includes the Lake Charles metro area, which has the smallest total population but is also relatively underrepresented in terms of LRTP investment, highlighting a potential need for additional outreach and technical assistance to support jurisdictions in this region in applying for LRTP funds. The state planning regions as defined below (Figure 3) are used throughout this document to aggregate and summarize survey findings and priority issues.

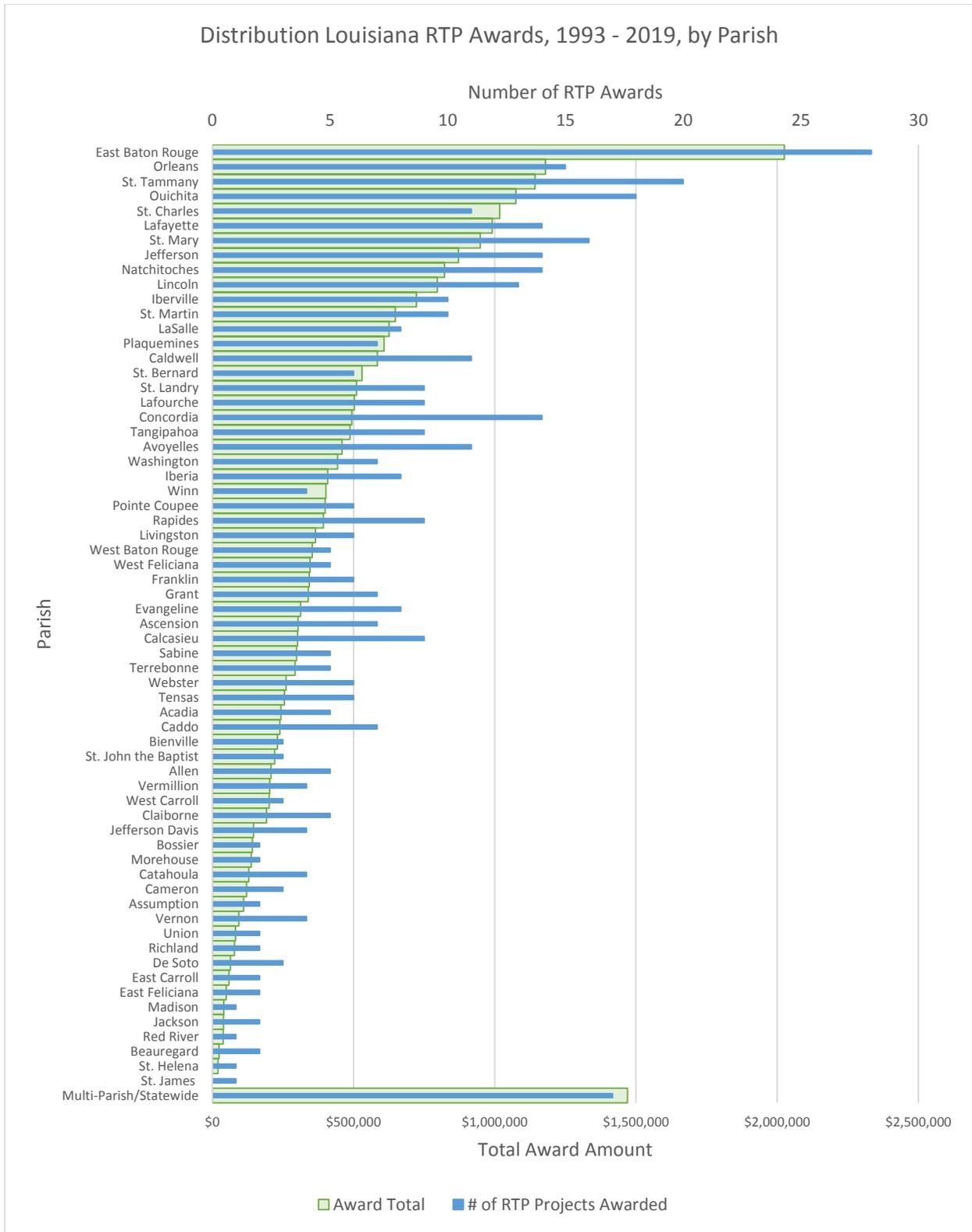


Figure 1: Distribution of Louisiana LRTP Awards, 1993 - 2019, by Parish

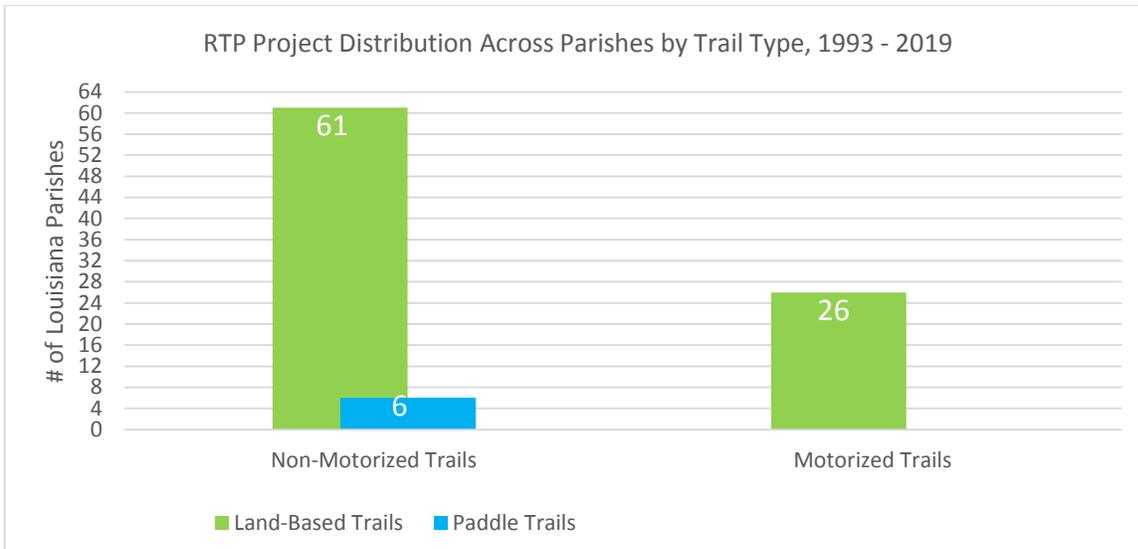


Figure 2: LRTP Project Distribution Across Parishes by Trail Type, 1993 - 2019

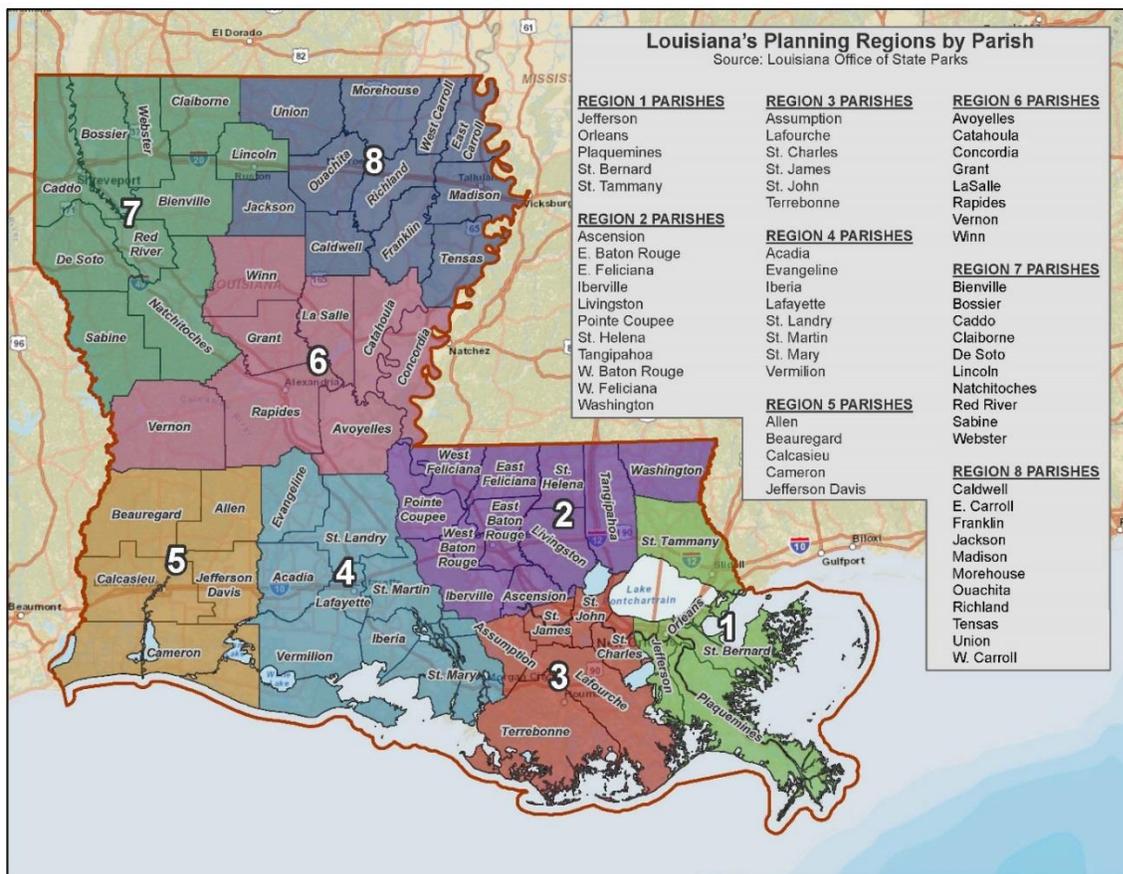


Figure 3: Louisiana's Planning Regions by Parish

Image Source: <https://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/grant-opportunities-for-outdoor-recreation/louisiana-outdoor-recreation/2014-2019-scorp/index>

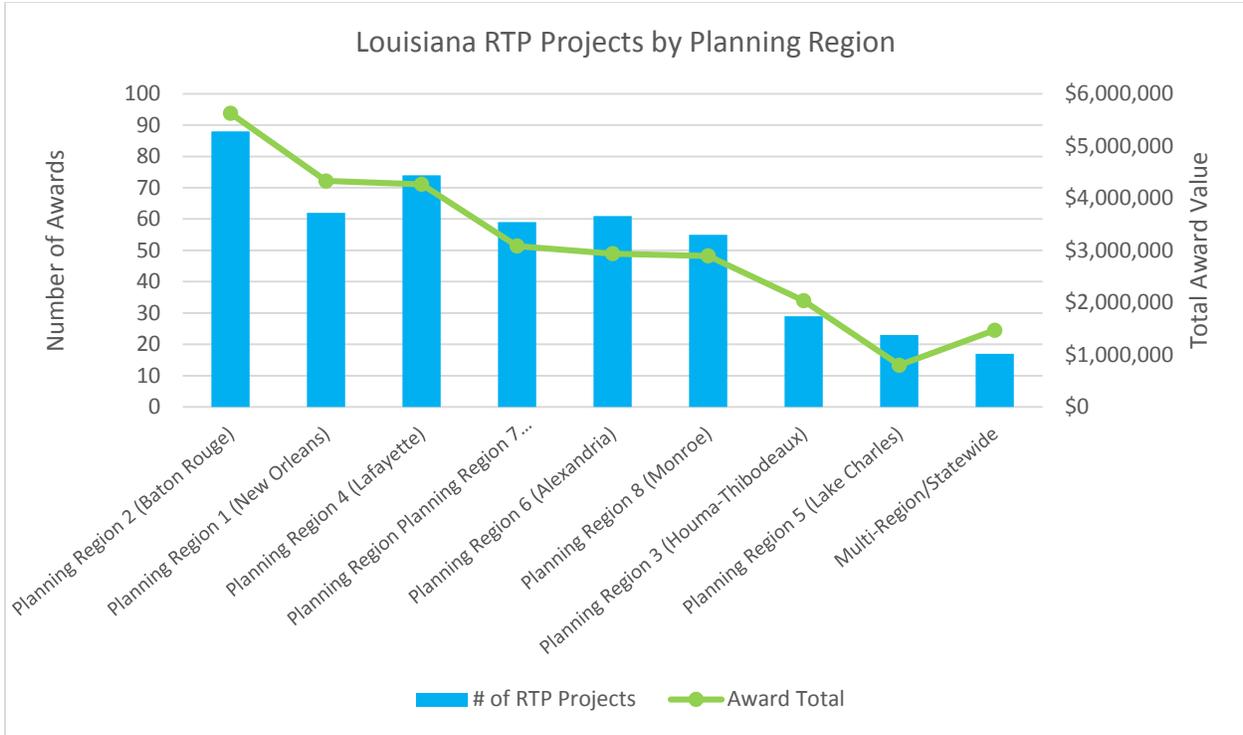


Figure 4: Louisiana RTP Projects by Planning Region, 1993 - 2019

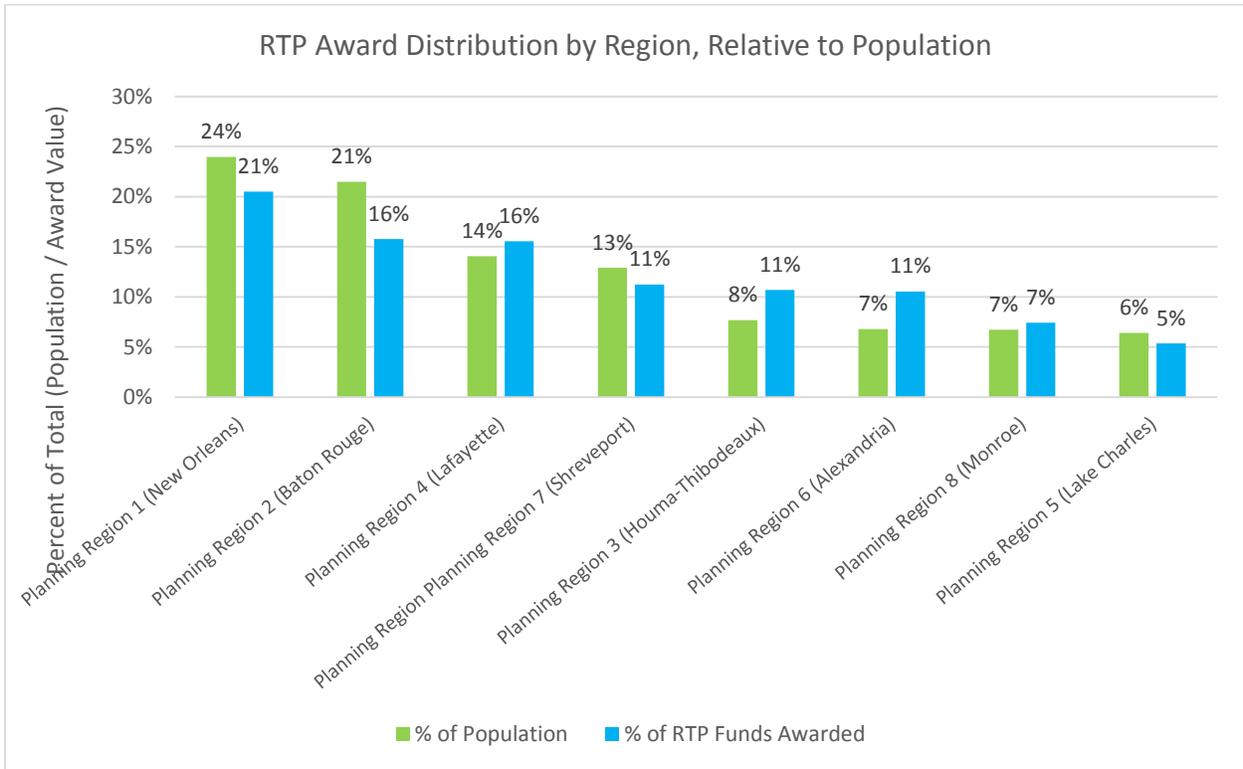


Figure 5: LRTP Award Distribution by Region, Relative to Population

Data Source: 2014-2019 SCORP; ESRI Business Information Solutions 2013 estimate based on U.S. 2010 Census data

The majority of applications to the LRTP (63%) have been led by municipal or Parish agencies, although state and federal partners, notably the USDA Forest Service and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, have played critical roles in the development of trails facilities across the state, as have non-profit user and “friends” groups, particularly for motorized trails projects, a large number of which have been developed in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Figure 6). Tourism bureaus, waterway authorities, and faith-based non-profits have also been involved in leading LRTP applications over the program’s 25-year history. It is important to note that many of the projects for which a local or parish government is the land owner and grant recipient also involve the support, collaboration, and strong buy-in of various other agencies, organizations, and community partners.

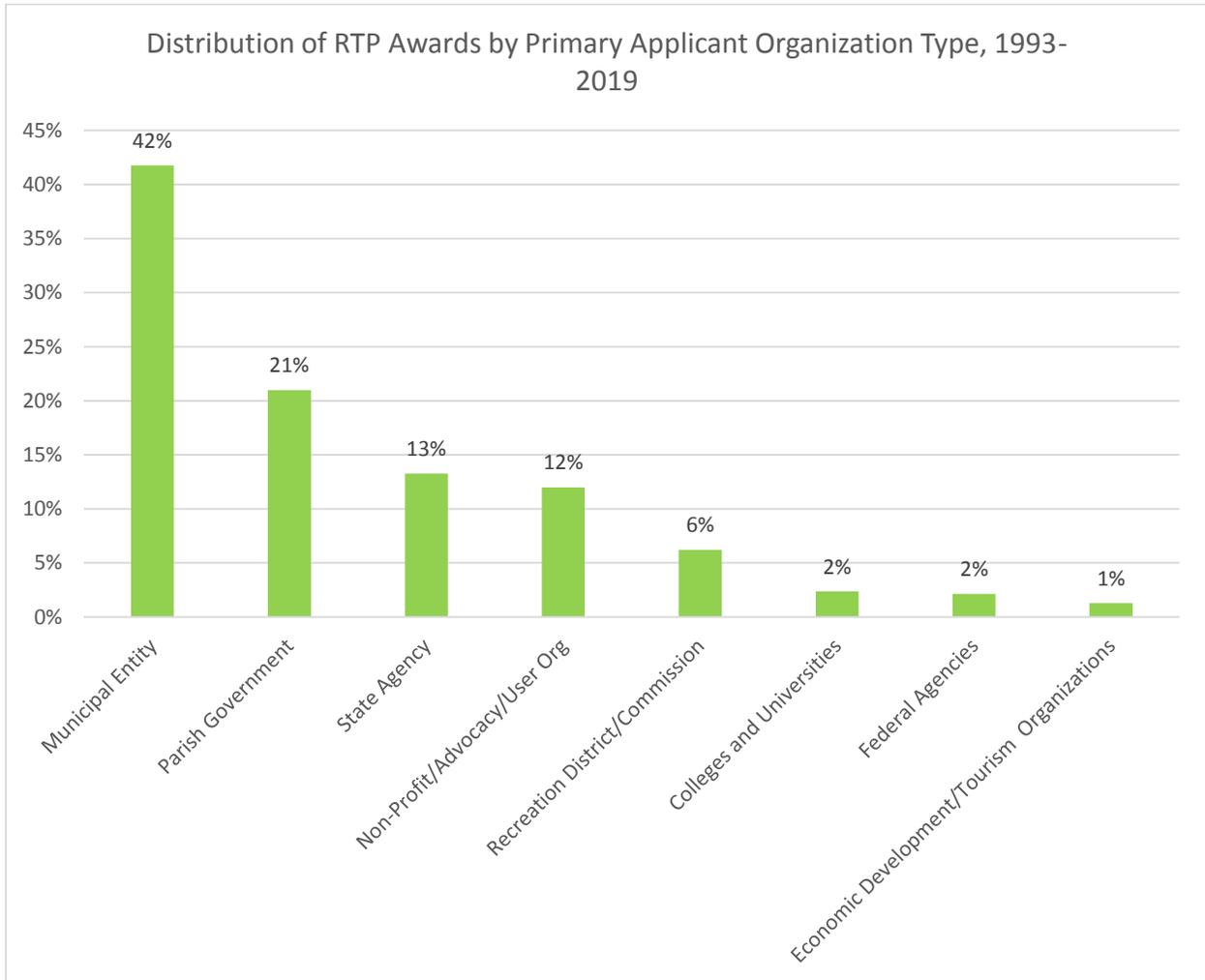


Figure 6: Distribution of LRTP Awards by Primary Applicant Organization Type

In accordance with program regulations, a minimum of 30% of LRTP funds must be allocated for projects pertaining to motorized recreation (although, notably, many trails facilities suitable for motorized vehicle use are also partly and/or seasonally utilized by non-motorized users). Typically, there are considerably more applications received for non-motorized projects each year than for motorized projects, although per-project dollar amounts for motorized trail projects tend to be higher.

Since the program's inception, funds awarded to primarily non-motorized project have tended to significantly exceed awards for motorized trail projects (Figure 7), although the program has consistently met the 30% overall spending threshold for motorized recreation uses since at least 2006. Thus far, paddle trail/waterway-based projects (a subcategory of non-motorized trails) have represented only a small fraction of LRTP awards, although significant opportunities for growth of water-based trail networks exists in the state.

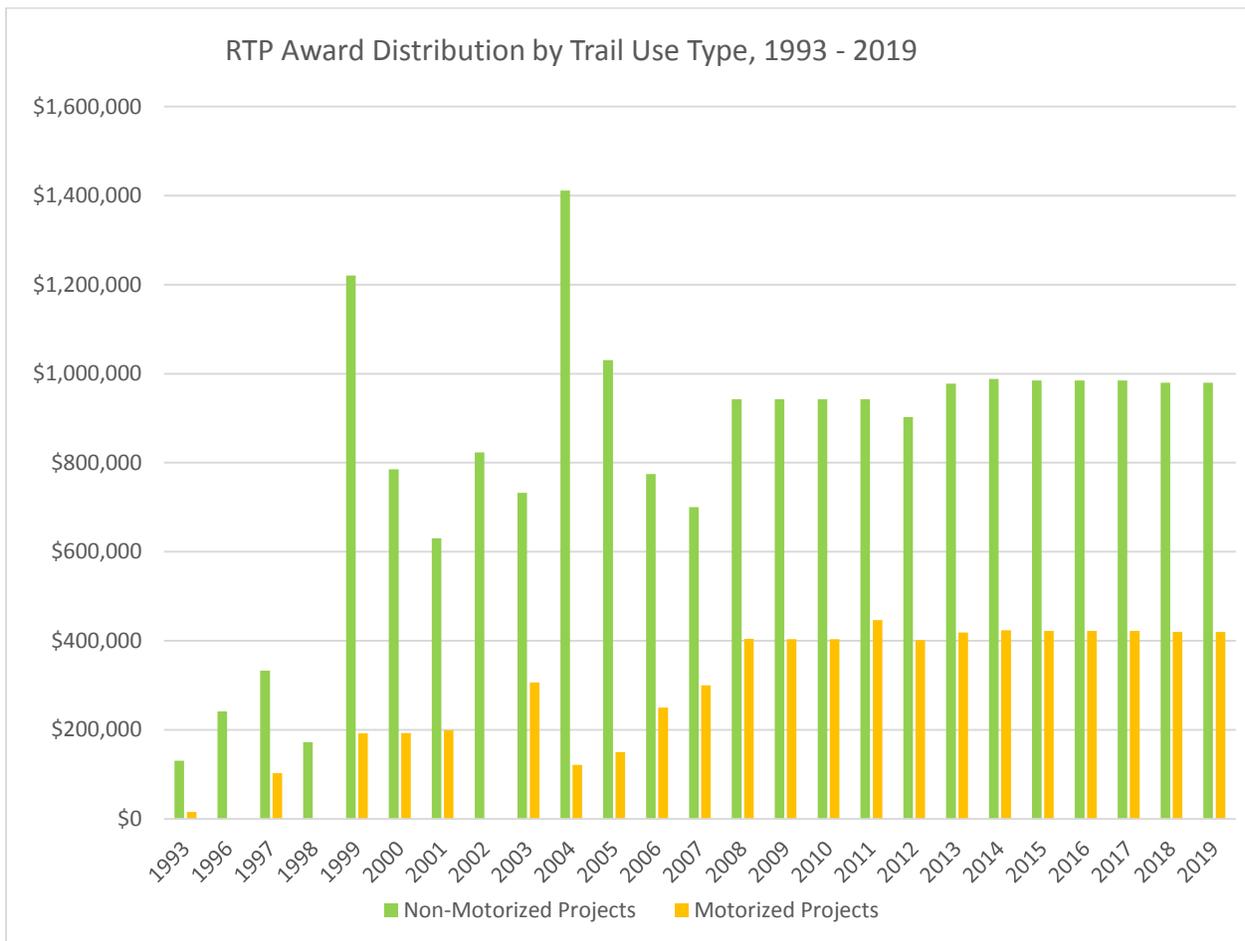


Figure 7: LRTP Award Distribution by Trail Use Type, 1993 - 2019

National Best Practices

A national review of statewide trails plans (including trails-focused portions of SCORPs) was conducted to identify national trends and assist in identification of potential issues and priorities for Louisiana recreational trails. Trails plans tend to involve an assessment of the present state of trails infrastructure and programs, a review of previous planning efforts and related documents including the intended and realized benefits of trails, an evaluation of significant statewide trail demand, issues, solutions, and funding priorities in terms of both future network development and trails management and stewardship, and a review of grant proposal criteria to ensure that these priorities are reflected in funding processes. A full inventory of plans reviewed can be found in Appendix A.

This survey of published plans indicates that the following themes, reflected in the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Louisiana Recreational Trails Strategic Plan, tend to be highlighted for recreational trails planning and funding distribution:

- **Accessibility:** recreational trails facilities should, to the greatest degree possible, be available to people of all ages and abilities
- **Active transportation:** recreational trails can, and in many circumstances should, also facilitate and promote non-motorized transportation modes that increase opportunities for physical activity in communities they serve.
- **Health:** Opportunities to improve the physical and mental health of users through provision of convenient, high-quality outdoor recreation activity (particularly for non-motorized trails, including paddle trails) is a nearly universally cited primary driver of trails investment, particularly in states where poor health outcomes including chronic disease and obesity are prevalent.
- **Connectivity:** the more interconnected trail systems are, both to other trails facilities and to destinations within the community (e.g. parks, schools and other public buildings, business districts, etc.), the more effectively they can serve residents' needs for both physical activity and transportation.¹³
- **Environment:** preservation of wildlife habitat, mitigation of environmental issues (e.g. climate change, coastal erosion), emissions reduction, and improved community resilience are key considerations for trail planning in a variety of regions and contexts.
- **Economic:** the use of recreational trails to also connect communities to employment, increase transportation choices, provide employment opportunities (i.e. through trail construction, management, and programming), and promote local economic growth through increased livability as well as tourism promotion is a key motivator for trails development in many communities.
- **Engagement:** Meaningful public participation in trails projects (through advisory committees, outreach, survey efforts, partnership with "friends of" groups, etc.) is a clear best practice: from project development to selection to implementation, robust opportunities for public engagement, consideration of the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, and identification of opportunities for involvement in management and/or programming of trails should be considered.
- **Data and Information:** a need for enhanced data is cited as a pressing need for many states. This includes improving the quality of trail inventories (typically including developing detailed spatial datasets, which are in many cases absent or incomplete), as well as collecting more data

¹³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Guide to Community Preventive Services*.
<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>

about trails use, users, and access. Moreover, increasing the availability and accessibility of trails-related information for the public is a common priority: demand for “one-stop-shop” information is high, and state trails programs have been identified as the natural lead to lead efforts and assist in coordinating promotion of trails opportunities for residents as well as visitors.

The [Coalition for Recreational Trails](#), a federation of national and regional trails-related organizations, lobbies Congress on matters related to RTP and other related issues regarding trails. It recognizes trails annually with its Tom Petri Annual Achievement Awards. Awards are distributed for contributions in the following categories:

- Maintenance and rehabilitation
- Innovative construction and design
- Public-private partnerships enhancing public lands access and use
- Community linkages that enhance opportunities for recreation OR transportation in local communities
- Education and communication (encouraging outdoor recreation and/or promoting safety, environmental awareness, etc.)
- Multiple use management and corridor sharing (for trails with multiple user types/modes)
- Accessibility enhancement (encouraging recreation opportunities for people with disabilities)
- Youth conservation/service corps and community outreach (effectively engaging youth in trail construction or maintenance)
- Engaging public-sector partners (for excellence in garnering local, state, and/or federal support for RTP projects or overall continuation and advancement of the RTP)
- Enhancement of federal lands through trail construction or rehabilitation to improve opportunities for public access and enjoyment

Either specific trail projects or programs may be recognized. In addition, individuals who have made outstanding contributions to trail planning, development, or maintenance (either private or public sector) may be recognized. Louisiana has received the following recognitions from the Coalition for Recreational Trails since 2008:

- 2008 Trail Worker Award: Richard Kittok, South Louisiana Trailblazers
- 2008 Trail Advocacy Award: John Tarver, L&A Trail, Inc.
- 2010 Trail Worker Award: John C. Leslie, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries
- 2010 Trail Advocacy Award: Kevin Davis, “Father of the Tammany Trace”
- 2013 Trail Worker Award: Freddie Paul, equestrian trail advocate
- 2013 Trail Advocacy Award: Jimmy L. Anthony, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries
- 2014 Maintenance and Rehabilitation Award: Sawyer Trail Project, Russell Sage WMA
- 2015 Community Linkage Award: Val Riess Park Multi-Use Trail
- 2015 Trail Worker Award: Raymond Pellerin, Bayou Teche Paddle Trail
- 2015 Trail Advocacy Award: Scott Schilling, founder of TRAIL (Transportation recreation Alternatives in Louisiana)
- 2017 State Award: Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser, Motorized Trails Advocacy by Local Government (Plaquemines Parish)

Trails and Coastal Restoration and Planning

Coordinating and leveraging public investments and assets to achieve multiple goals across agencies and jurisdictions is increasingly imperative, given limited and often uncertain fiscal resources. In Louisiana, coastal planning and restoration is a critical priority. Significant opportunities exist to integrate recreational trails and other public outdoor recreation projects into existing coastal and protection assets (including levee structures, drainage and other rights-of-way, surface waterways, etc.) as well as planned or envisioned restoration and protection projects within Louisiana's Coastal Zone that require state or federal permitting.¹⁴

Funds established through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), for example, intended to assist in the restoration and recovery of the Gulf following the *Deepwater Horizon* spill have been directed through the National Fish and Wildlife Federation to mitigate harm caused as a result of that event, while the RESTORE Act supports restoration and protection of a variety of natural resources, ecosystems, and economic functions of Gulf Coast regions.¹⁵ Coordination is needed between programs and funds aimed at environmental restoration and conservation with other state and federal programs with symbiotic goals, such as LRTP. Such coordination should occur at the project level (i.e., by leveraging funding from different sources as permitted by program rules and by ensuring that projects support multiple objectives) as well as at a broader institutional and/or planning level, i.e., by periodically convening meetings between agencies administering different programs and funds to identify shared programmatic goals and develop strategies to maximize program impacts and positive outcomes and achieve goals identified in pre-existing state regional, and local plans, programs and policies, including but not limited to the [Coastal Master Plan](#)¹⁶

Federal programs and processes may and should be coordinated with restoration and conservation policies and programs with overlapping areas of interest and aligned goals to provide long-term protection for Gulf resources, minimize duplication of efforts, and maximize impacts by filling gaps in funding among state and federal programs, which may have misaligned funding cycles, exclusions, etc. For recreational trails, acquisition of land or right-of-way for new trails is the most common barrier. Trails plans may thus benefit from integration into conservation-focused proposals eligible for additional funding sources. Conversely, other programs support activities that increase the sustainability, appeal, and/or wildlife and habitat conservation value of trail corridors, or support educational programming co-located with trail facilities.

Examples of federal programs for which coordination with the LRTP may provide additional benefits toward both coastal protection/restoration and outdoor recreation/trail network development goals include:

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** – major supporter of land acquisition and outdoor recreation development projects (50% state/local match)

¹⁴ Representing 20 south Louisiana parishes as described by LA R.S. 49:214.24; for additional information see Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management *A Coastal User's Guide to the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program* (2015). <http://data.dnr.louisiana.gov/LCP/LCPHANDBOOK/FinalUsersGuide.pdf>

¹⁵ Environmental Law Institute (2016). *Building Bridges: Connecting the Overlapping Goals, Resources, and Institutions of Gulf of Mexico Restoration and Conservation*. <http://eli-ocean.org/gulf/building-bridges/>

¹⁶ The Environmental Law Institute maintains a database of such plans and information about related programs: <http://eli-ocean.org/gulf/building-bridges/>

- **RESTORE Act** – Allows 65% of funds to count as nonfederal match for federal grant programs and prioritizes projects included in “existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources”¹⁷
- **Coastal Zone Management and Administration Project Grants (CZMA) Section 306 and 306A** – supports restoration of coastal areas and resources, redevelopment of urban waterfronts and ports (50% state/local match)
- **Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act** – land acquisition, habitat conservation, wetland restoration (50% state/local match)
- **North American Wetlands Conservation Fund** – supports land acquisition projects protecting wetlands and waterfowl habitat (40% state/local match); public and private entities are eligible
- **Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act** - supports land acquisitions and improvements for wildlife habitat, research, and public use (25% state/local match)
- **Coastal Wetlands, Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act** – supports wetlands conservation and land acquisition (15% state/local match)
- **Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program** - land acquisition and conservation easements (50% state/local match)
- **Coastal Impact Assistance Program** – supports conservation, protection, and restoration
- **Emergency Wetlands Resources Act** – supports research and restoration of wetlands
- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program** – supports land acquisition of wetlands and riparian areas
- **Forest Legacy Program** – partial-interest land acquisition for forest protection on private land (25% state/local match)
- **Community Forest Program** – land acquisition (50% state/local match)
- **State Wildlife Grants** – conservation planning, climate change adaptation, habitat management, property acquisition (25% state/local match)
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** – projects to restore or enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats (50% state/local match)
- **Partners for Fish and Wildlife** – land conservation projects
- **Landowner Incentive Program** – technical or financial assistance for private landowners for habitat improvement, restoration, or land protection
- **Tribal Wildlife Grants** – technical and financial assistance for fish, wildlife, and habitat programs
- **Cooperative Landscape Conservation Grants** – conservation planning and implementation
- **Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreements** – stream bank stabilization, watershed restoration, and conservation planning projects

A number of best practices identified by the Environmental Law Institute for Gulf restoration projects¹⁸ equally apply for recreational trails projects, indicative of the (potentially) closely aligned goals among these efforts: In order to add value to restoration and conservation efforts, trails and trails-related facilities must provide tangible ecological benefits by restoring or conserving habitat, protecting coastal or marine resources, or reducing an ecosystem stressor that affects long-term sustainability. Trails components may also provide an opportunity to integrate workforce development and community education activities into restoration projects, increase community resilience, and provide social, cultural, and/or economic benefits to impacted communities. Moreover, both restoration projects and trails projects benefit from inter-jurisdictional cooperation, intrinsic connection to a long-term vision or plan, and robust maintenance and management plans.

¹⁷ RESTORE Act 1603(t)(2)(D)(iii)(III)

¹⁸ Environmental Law Institute (2017). [Good Projects Checklist: Important Elements for Gulf Restoration Projects](#)

Trails are an effective asset to encourage people to participate in outdoor activities, which is known in itself to help increase citizen awareness of and support for nature conservation and environmental stewardship. At the same time, the increased presence of people in natural areas, including delicate coastal environments, can impact wildlife, habitat, and environmental integrity that is of great concern to conservation and restoration efforts. Thus, cross-collaboration between trails advocates and those involved in efforts to protect, restore, and manage coastal ecosystems and infrastructure, as well as the natural and engineered systems that protect Louisiana communities from environmental hazards, is essential.

For example, water trails, which are becoming a greater priority for active transportation in many states, including Louisiana, represent an area of significant opportunity for leveraging co-benefits with some of the programs identified above. Water trails are some of the least expensive trails that can be built, on a per-mile basis, since the trail (waterway) already exists. However, in order to serve as a recreational asset, legal access to the waterway and user amenities such as parking, signage, and launch facilities must be developed, and facilities must be regulated and managed (as by designating non-motorized only paddle trails) to mitigate harm to species, water quality, etc.

A few examples of projects which have leveraged recreational trails projects in support of coastal planning and environmental restoration efforts include:

- [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#), Golden Gate, California: a variety of trails have been incorporated into creek, lagoon, and floodplain restoration projects to prevent habitat loss, preserve biodiversity, and simultaneously engage visitors in experiencing local landscapes and get involved in stewardship programs.
- [Fort Bragg Coastal Restoration and Trail Project](#), Fort Bragg, California: a former lumber mill was transformed into 93 acres of parkland and native habitat, with several trail facilities and installation of a natural drainage system.
- [Santa Margarita River Trail Preserve](#), San Diego, California: a recently announced project involving a diverse range of grant funds to establish a preserve along the California coast and re-establish trout populations and preserve natural resources, while enhancing public access.

In other states, grant programs intended to protect and manage coastal resources specifically highlight paddle trails and other public access enhancements as eligible project components (e.g. Florida's [Coastal Partnership Initiative](#)), while national organizations such as The Nature Conservancy have provided resources outlining methods for quantifying the socioeconomic benefits of restoration and leveraging multiple benefits to various stakeholders.¹⁹

Finally, both locally and nationally, the integration of “green infrastructure” features and approaches that support stormwater management and improved air/water quality into public investments of all kinds, including transportation and recreation infrastructure, is a growing priority for many communities. Trails projects are often ideal candidates for the incorporation of such features, supporting both the utility and sustainability of the trails (as by preventing flooding), as well as efforts to protect habitat and wildlife (e.g. minimizing erosion and contaminants from runoff). Identification of green infrastructure best practices for different types of trails is recommended to maximize such potential co-benefits.

¹⁹ Schuster, E., and Doerr, P. (2015). *A Guide for Incorporating Ecosystem Service Valuation into Coastal Restoration Projects*. The Nature Conservancy, New Jersey Chapter. Delmont, NJ.
<https://www.nature.org/media/oceansandcoasts/ecosystem-service-valuation-coastal-restoration.pdf>

Trails Access and Health Equity Analysis

In order to assess how the Louisiana Recreational Trails program has expanded access to outdoor recreation and active transportation opportunities across the state, it is essential to better understand the geographic distribution of these projects and their relationship to the state's population. To date, no comprehensive spatial database compiling LRTP projects and/or trails, generally, has been developed.

The purpose of this project task is to conduct a spatial analysis of statewide trails access using best-available data, and evaluate the demographic characteristics of communities surrounding trails, including health indicators and outcomes as available.

Ultimately, the findings of this effort are intended to form the groundwork for continued collection, synthesis, and application of spatial data for use by the LRTP and other programs and governmental entities. In addition, this research aims to directly support identification of opportunities for outreach and strategic investment in future program implementation in communities where projects can be expected to have significant access and network impacts.

Methodology

Development of a comprehensive LRTP project database, including detailed point and linear spatial data for each project (as well as, eventually, non-LRTP trail facilities) is an ongoing effort. As a first phase of this endeavor, the approximate geographic coordinates of trailheads and/or trails locations (representative midpoints, presumed entrance to the facility such as parking lot, or any identifying detail described in LRTP records as pertaining to the awarded project) were mapped. In cases where insufficient detail was known about a given project, best-guess approximations of the presumed trails location were inserted (e.g. the center of small, rural communities) and these records were flagged for future follow-up research to refine the specific location. In total, 421 individual points were mapped (out of a database of 437 projects from 1993 - 2017,²⁰ some of which represent multiple projects impacting one trail facility), while 16 projects were excluded due to insufficient spatial information available (Figure 8; map series begins on p.22).

Next, using Esri ArcGIS software, a map layer representing a 5-mile buffer around each of these trails location points was developed to represent the immediate catchment area for each project (Figure 9). In urbanized areas, this five-mile buffer fully contains multiple census tracts, the smallest unit of analysis readily available, while in rural areas, it may represent only a fraction of one or more tracts. In order to extract a reasonably approximate estimate of the number of residents who live within five miles of one or more LRTP projects, tract-level American Community Survey data was mapped and a layer was extracted representing the portion of each underlying census tract that is within the buffer layer, and the area of each resulting new polygon was calculated. Then, the percentage of each census tract that is represented by the intersection is calculated to estimate the proportion of the tract population within the five-mile buffer area.

Next, trail distribution was evaluated relative to various socioeconomic indicators, including median income, non-white population, and share of population over age 65 in order to better understand the kind of communities most immediately served by the LRTP. Figures presented represent only the census tract in which the trails (point location) is located or centered, which may not be fully representative of the full range of likely trails users, especially for larger trail facilities and/or in dense urbanized areas. Once a full database of linear trail facilities is complete, additional analysis for communities surrounding

²⁰ 2018 and 2019 trail award data was not yet available at the time of this analysis

these facilities (which often include multiple census tracts) is recommended. Finally, CDC and Louisiana Department of Health data at the census tract or parish level are overlaid to better understand the relationship between health outcomes and indicators and trails access and investment.

Trails Access

Out of a total state population of 4,463,461,²¹ an estimated 3,318,815 people (74.4%) live within five miles of one or more LRTP projects/trail facilities (Table 1). Once all trails are fully mapped, this figure will undoubtedly increase somewhat, as the buffer/catchment area of linear trails, some of which are many miles long, would cover a greater area of the state.

Of the 421 mapped trail point locations, 186 (44.2%) fall within Census-designated Urban Areas²² (Figure 10), while approximately 73% of the state's population lives within such areas, indicating that proportionally, a greater share of LRTP projects are implemented in rural contexts (including small towns, as well as many projects located in national and state forests, parks, and wildlife management areas) relative to population distribution.

The distribution of LRTP projects by primary use²³ varies by region (Figure 11). Motorized trails are more prevalent in central and Northern Louisiana, while the greatest density of non-motorized trails is concentrated in the major urban centers of New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Evaluated by region, the estimated percentage of the population living within five miles of an LRTP project/facility (any type) varies from 96.2% (Region 4) to 33.8% (Region 6). These figures correspond closely with access to non-motorized trails, as these make up the majority of LRTP projects in most areas and are more likely to be located within or near to population centers, relative to motorized trails, many of which are in rural or forest/natural areas. Motorized trails coverage ranges from an estimated 0% of the population of Region 5 living within 5 miles of an LRTP-affiliated motorized trails (most of which are in more rural or remote areas, relative to non-motorized trails), to 9.4% in Region 8. Similarly, LRTP paddle trails access (as a subset of non-motorized trails) ranges from 0% to 11.9% of the regional population.

Table 1: Distribution of LRTP Projects by Region and Trail Use Type

| Region | % of Population within 5 Miles of... | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Any RTP Project/Trail | RTP Non-Motorized Land-Based Trail | RTP Motorized Trail | RTP Non-Motorized Water Trail |
| Statewide | 74.4% | 72.4% | 3.8% | 1.9% |
| 1 | 88.5% | 88.3% | 3.9% | 0.0% |
| 2 | 76.6% | 75.5% | 1.5% | 0.0% |
| 3 | 76.1% | 75.5% | 6.3% | 0.0% |
| 4 | 96.2% | 92.6% | 0.2% | 3.9% |
| 5 | 62.5% | 62.5% | 0.0% | 9.4% |
| 6 | 33.8% | 29.6% | 9.4% | 0.0% |
| 7 | 49.1% | 47.2% | 2.4% | 0.0% |
| 8 | 58.0% | 52.1% | 8.4% | 11.9% |

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017 ACS 5-Year estimates

²² One of 173 Urbanized Areas and Urban Clusters as defined by U.S. Census Bureau, 2010. <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-20.pdf>

²³ Importantly, many LRTP projects provide new or improved trails access for a variety of user types, sometimes including both motorized and non-motorized activities, such as seasonal hiking on ATV trails, or inclusion of pedestrian facilities at paddle trail trailheads. For the sake of simplicity, only the trails user/use type identified as the primary focus of the project (motorized, non-motorized, or water) is evaluated here.

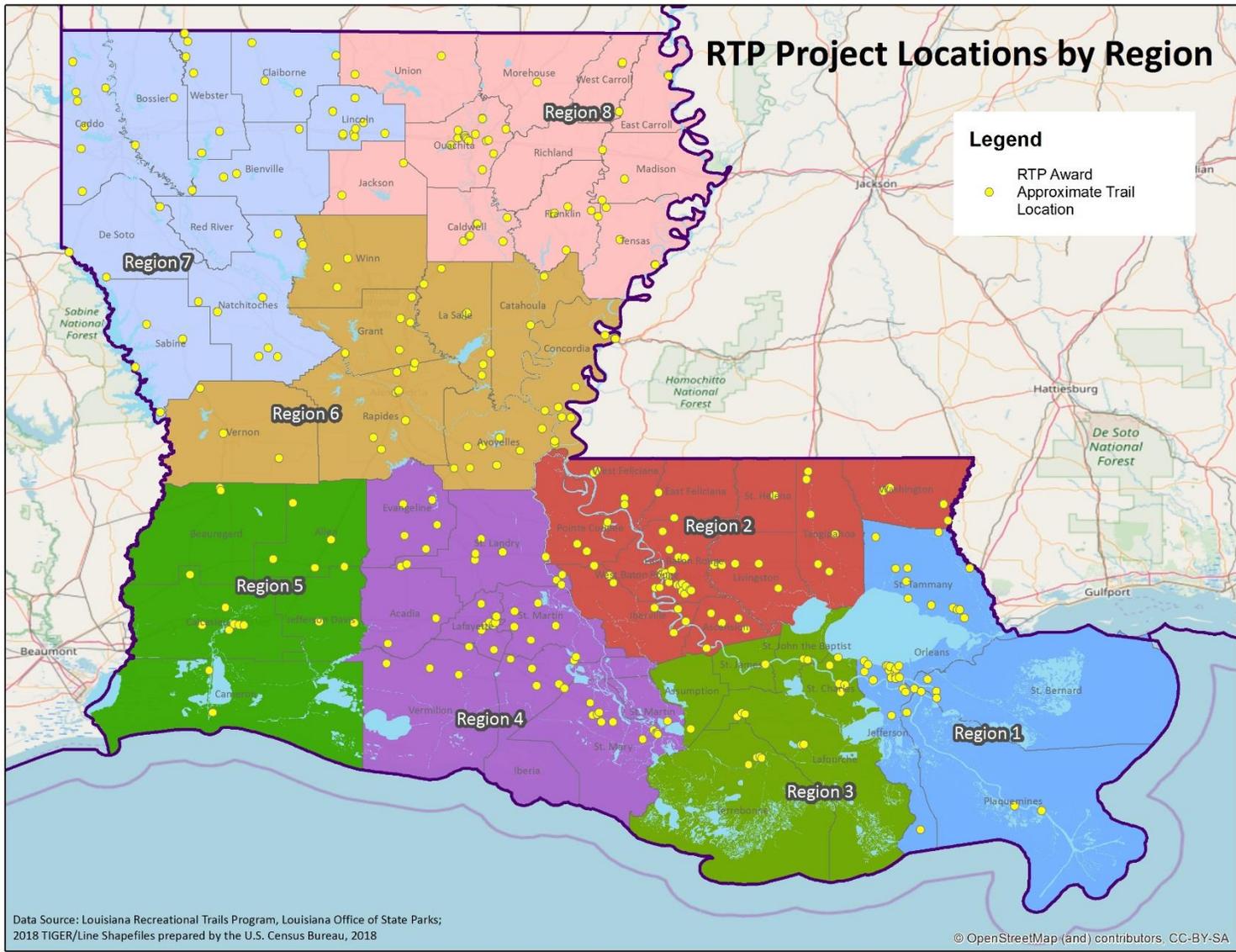


Figure 8: LRTP Project Locations by Region

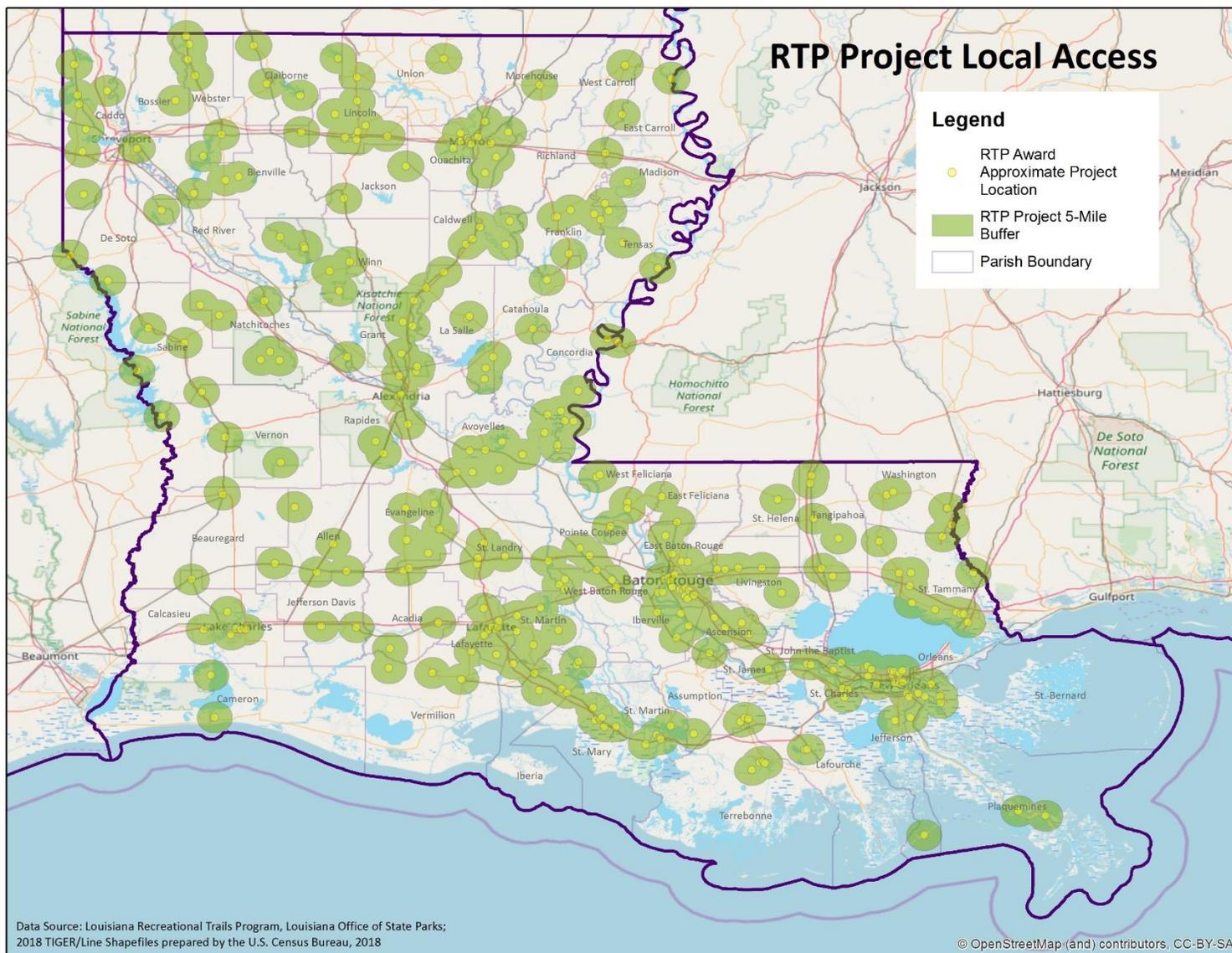


Figure 9: LRTP Project Local Access - 5-Mile Buffers

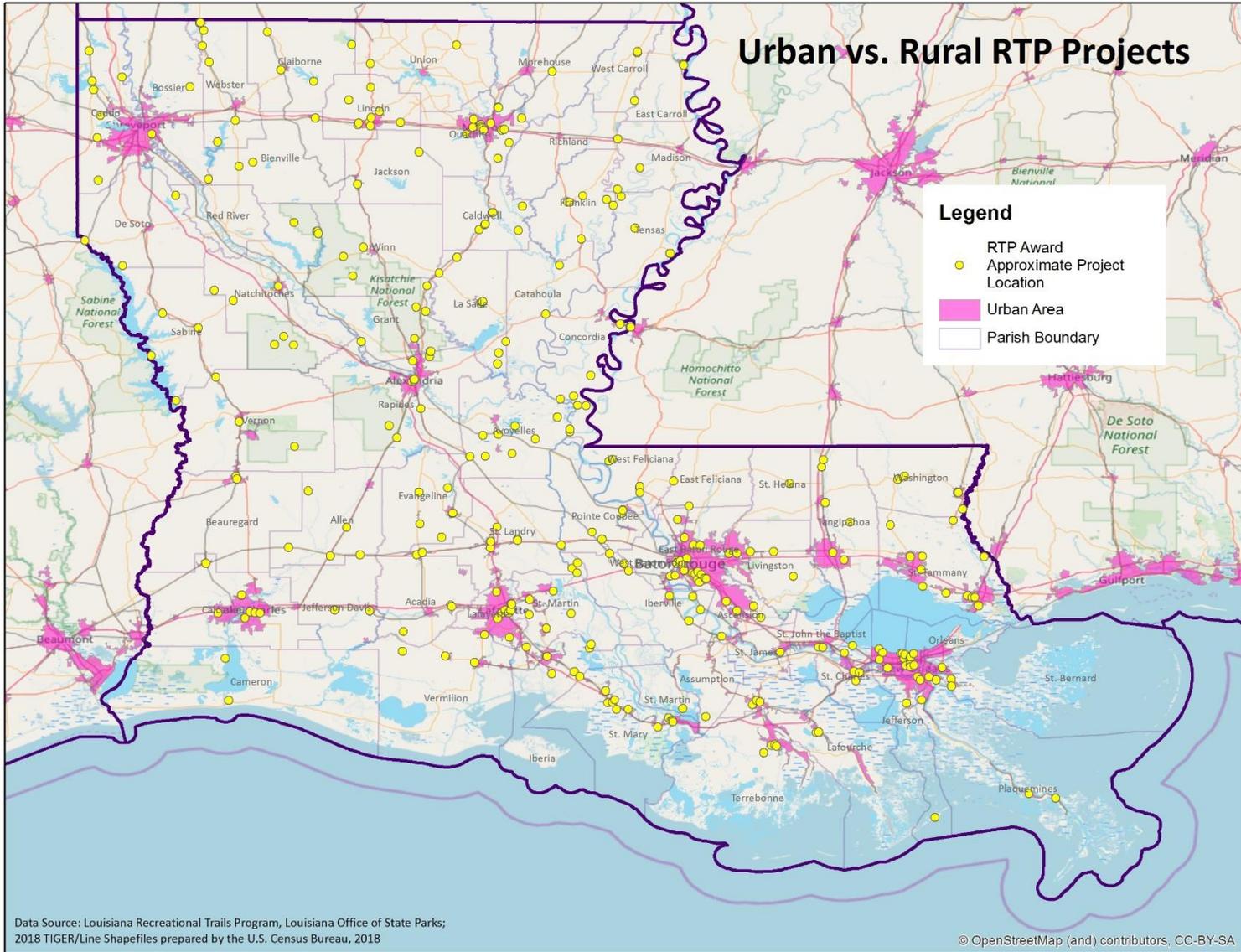


Figure 10: Urban vs. Rural LRTP Projects

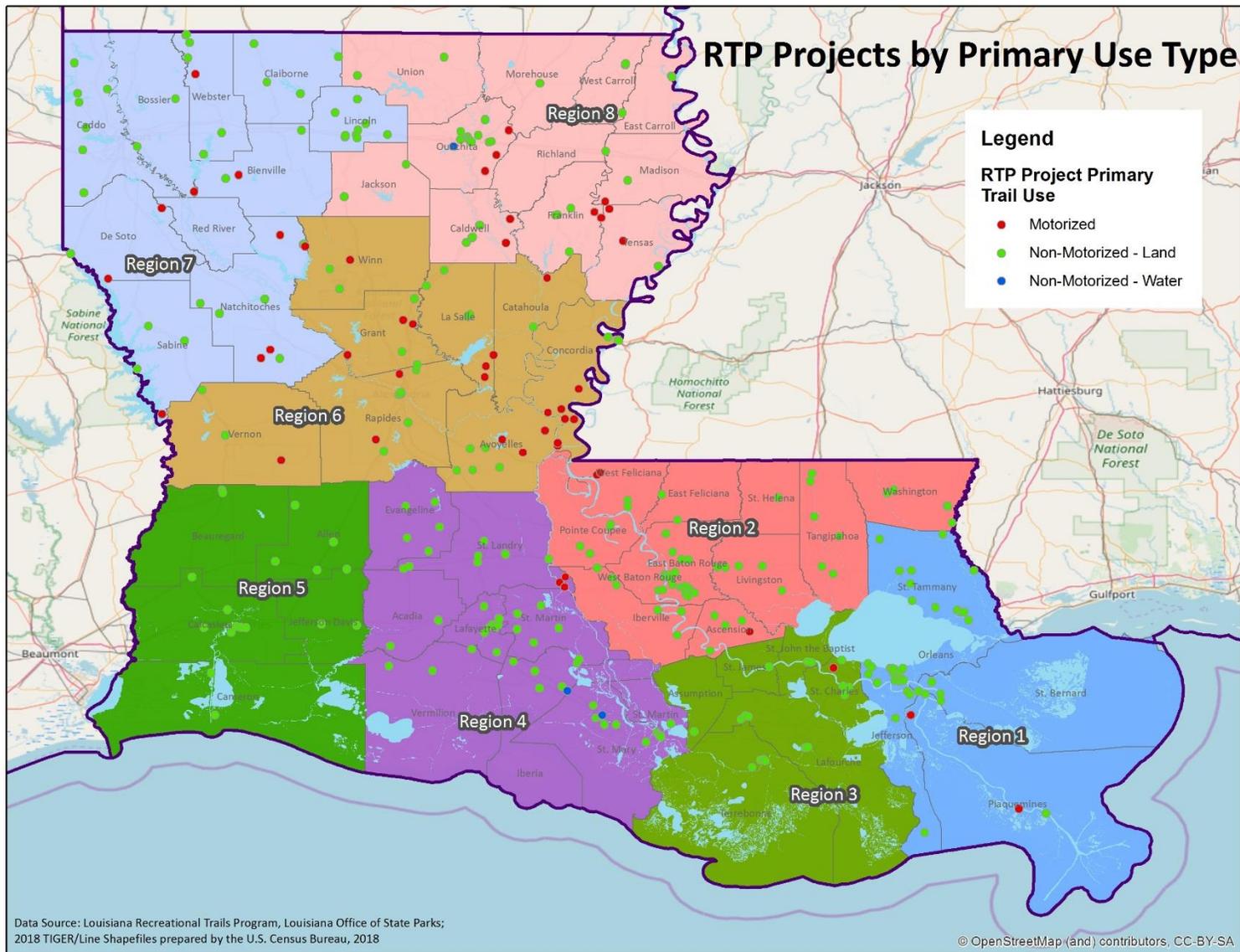


Figure 11: LRTP Projects by Primary Use Type

Overall, 68% of LRTP projects (for which tract-level data is available) are located in census tracts where the median individual income is less than the statewide average (Table 2; Figure 12), while only 12% of projects are located in the highest-income quantile of the state, indicating that the LRTP is effectively reaching communities where access to publicly available outdoor recreation opportunities may be most needed.

Table 2: LRTP Project Distribution and Census Tract Median Individual Income

| Median Individual Income | |
|--|-------------------------|
| | Percent of RTP Projects |
| Less than \$17,000 | 16.2% |
| \$17,001 - 22,000 | 30.3% |
| \$22,001 - 26,000 | 23.5% |
| \$26,001 - 32,000 | 17.9% |
| Greater than \$32,000 | 12.1% |
| % below Statewide Median Income of \$25,086 | 68.5% |

As noted above, the overall distribution of LRTP project somewhat favors rural communities, relative to the share of population these areas represent. Relatedly, trails projects are more likely to be found in communities which have a smaller non-white/multi-race population, relative to the state overall average of 37.6% (Table 3; Figure 13). To a large degree, this mismatch may be attributed to the greater density of majority non-white census tracts in denser urbanized areas, where trails represented in this analysis by the single census tract in which the trails coordinates are located are in fact locally accessible to many additional tracts nearby. In other words, in dense urban areas, where census tracts are much smaller, this analysis underestimates the number and diversity of nearby residents who may easily access and utilize trails facilities. However, additional research is recommended to better understand racial disparities in trails access (in terms proximity as well as other variables which impact trails usage) in order to ensure that all communities are being equitably served.

Table 3: LRTP Project Distribution and Non-White Population of Underlying Census Tract

| Non-White Population | Louisiana Census | |
|--|------------------|--------------|
| | RTP Projects | Tracts |
| Greater than 80% | 3.3% | 16.9% |
| > 60 - 80% | 10.0% | 11.7% |
| > 40 - 60% | 16.4% | 15.3% |
| > 20 - 40% | 31.2% | 26.1% |
| Less than 20% | 39.0% | 30.1% |
| % with non-white population greater than Statewide Overall average of 37.6% | 34.5% | 46.6% |

Increasingly, cities and towns are seeking to become places where their citizens can comfortably age in place, with convenient recreation and transportation options for older residents to support active lifestyles and vibrant communities. In this regard, the LRTP appears to be effectively serving communities with aging populations, with the majority of projects located in census tracts with a share of the population over age 65 that is greater than the statewide median of 14% (Table 4; Figure 14).

Additional evaluation to identify communities with high proportions of senior residents and opportunities to target recreational trails opportunities within these areas is recommended.

Table 4: LRTP Project Distribution and Population Age 65 and Over

| Population 65 and Over | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| | <i>RTP Projects</i> | <i>Louisiana Census Tracts</i> |
| Less than 9% | 7.9% | 11.7% |
| > 9 - 14% | 32.9% | 35.3% |
| > 14 - 18% | 39.0% | 30.5% |
| > 18 - 24% | 14.3% | 18.0% |
| Greater than 24% | 6.0% | 4.4% |
| % with 65+ population greater than Statewide overall average of 14% | 73.2% | 53.0% |

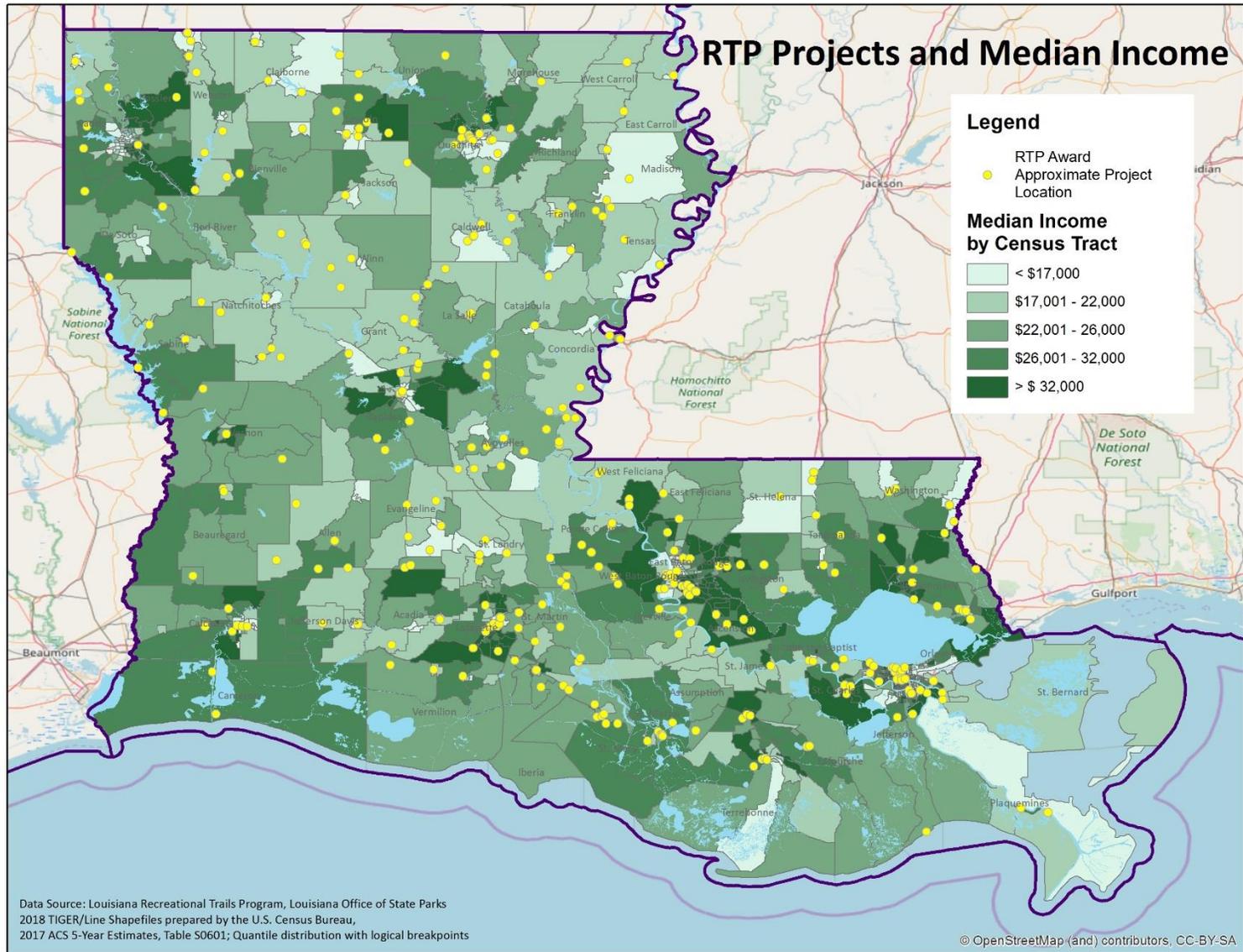


Figure 12: LRTP Projects and Median Income

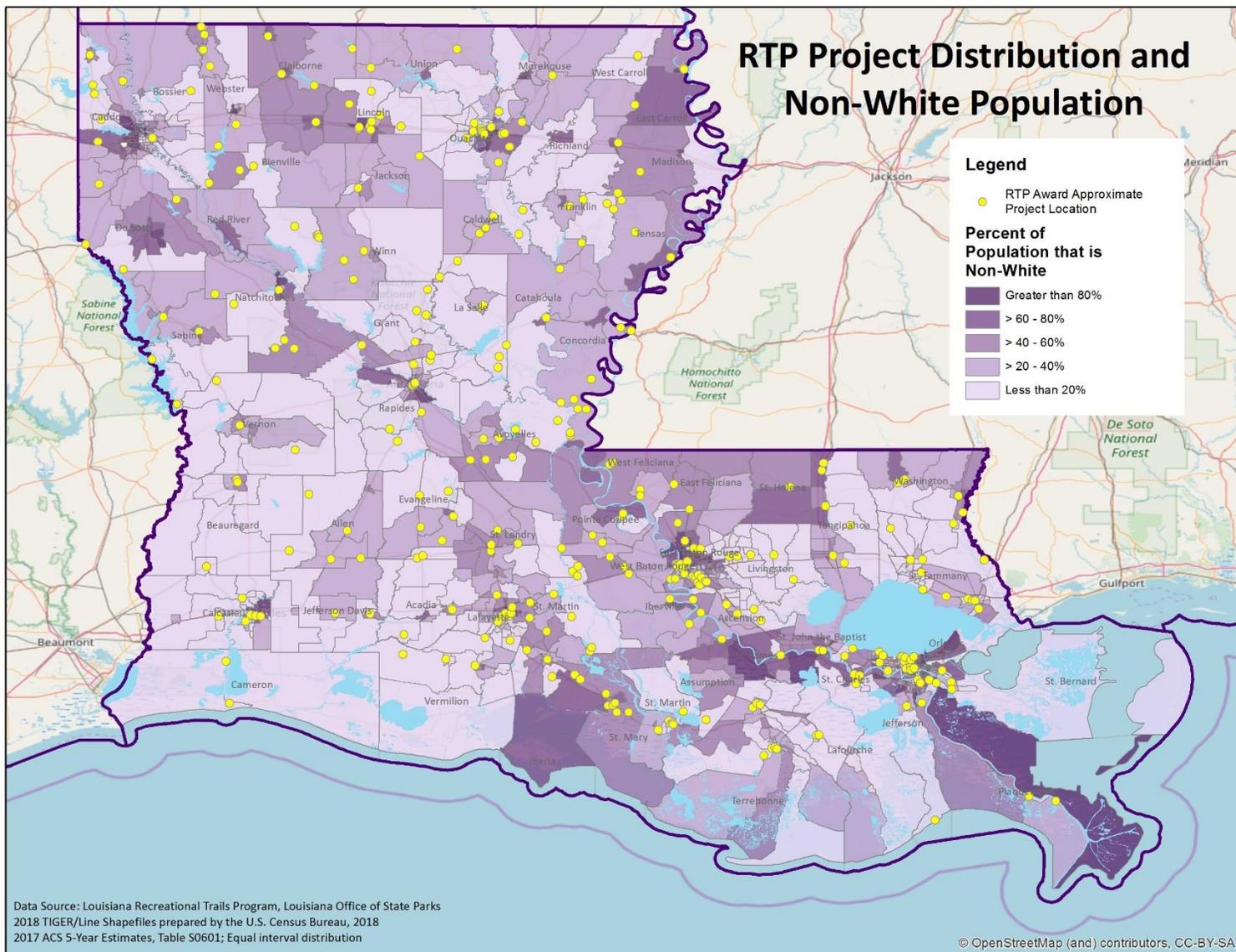


Figure 13: LRTP Project Distribution and Non-White Population

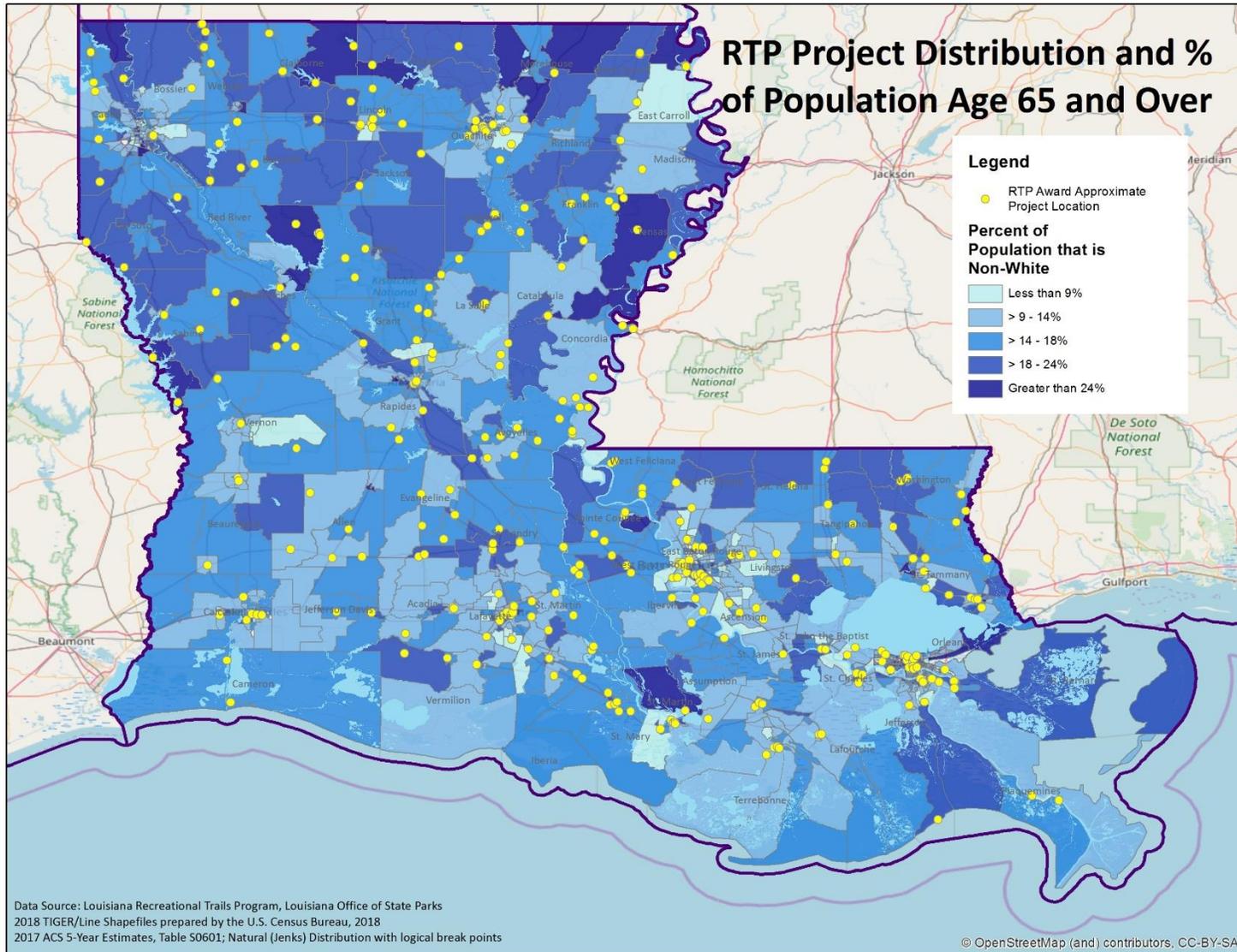


Figure 14: LRTP Project Distribution and Population Age 65 and Over

Health Equity

In order to begin to evaluate how Recreational Trails projects relate to health outcomes, census tract (where available) and parish-level data were analyzed across three key indicators of health which may relate to physical activity: life expectancy, obesity, and sedentary behavior.

Life expectancy in Louisiana varies widely by census tract, ranging from 62 to 88 years.²⁴ Overall, the median life expectancy for residents in census tracts where LRTP projects have been awarded (75.8 years) is similar to the statewide median of 75.5 years. Although no causal relationship may be drawn about trails facilities and life expectancy, it is worth considering opportunities to prioritize projects in communities with a lower-than-average life expectancy in order to support efforts to encourage more active lifestyles. At present, slightly less than half (49%) of LRTP projects are located in such areas (Table 5; Figure 15).

Table 5: LRTP Project Distribution and Life Expectancy in Underlying Census Tract

| Life Expectancy | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| | RTP Project Tracts | | Louisiana Census Tracts |
| 62 - 72 | | 11.6% | 17.6% |
| 72 - 75 | | 29.1% | 24.0% |
| 75 - 77 | | 24.3% | 21.5% |
| 77 - 79 | | 21.3% | 14.1% |
| 79+ | | 13.7% | 15.4% |
| Median Life Expectancy | | 75.8 | 75.5 |

Similarly, obesity rates (for which data is only available at the Parish level²⁵) cannot be directly linked to the presence or absence of recreational trail facilities, as there are innumerable factors which contribute to these statistics. However, it is notable that relatively few LRTP projects are currently found in parishes with the highest obesity rates (Table 6; Figure 16), representing another opportunity to encourage project development in areas where it may be of maximum benefit to surrounding communities.

Table 6: LRTP Project Distribution and Parish-Level Obesity Rate

| Obesity Rate | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| | RTP Projects | | Louisiana Parishes |
| Less than 32% | | 13.1% | 9.4% |
| 32 - 35% | | 27.6% | 26.6% |
| 35 - 37% | | 30.4% | 29.7% |
| 37 - 40% | | 23.8% | 23.4% |
| Over 40% | | 5.2% | 10.9% |
| % below statewide Obesity rate of 34.5% | | 34.2% | 28.1% |

²⁴ National Center for Health Statistics. U.S. Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP): Life Expectancy Estimates File for {Jurisdiction}, 2010-2015]. National Center for Health Statistics. 2018. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>

²⁵ Louisiana Department of Health Data Portal, Percent of Age-Adjusted Adults classified as Obese, 2017, <https://healthdata.dhh.la.gov/>

Finally, the percent of adults reporting no leisure time physical activity other than their regular job in the last 30 days²⁶ tends to be lower in parishes where there are more LRTP projects (largely attributable to concentrations of trails facilities in a handful of parishes with lower rates of inactivity). Overall, more LRTP projects (52.7%) are located in parishes with rates of physical inactivity below the state average than those where sedentary behavior is more prevalent (Table 7; Figure 17). Continuing to provide recreational trails access to active communities with high existing demand should be balanced by efforts to encourage physical activity in more sedentary parishes in order to facilitate improved long-term health outcomes.

Table 7: LRTP Project Distribution and Parish-level Physical Inactivity Rate

| Physical Inactivity Rate | RTP Projects | Louisiana Parishes |
|--|--------------|--------------------|
| 24 - 28% | 17.8% | 10.9% |
| 28 - 31% | 22.3% | 21.9% |
| 31 - 33% | 32.8% | 35.9% |
| 33 - 35% | 21.4% | 21.9% |
| 35 - 37% | 5.7% | 9.4% |
| % below statewide physical inactivity rate of 31.8% | 52.7% | 48.4% |

²⁶ Louisiana Department of Health Data Portal, Percent of adults reporting no leisure time physical activity, 2010, <https://healthdata.dhh.la.gov/>

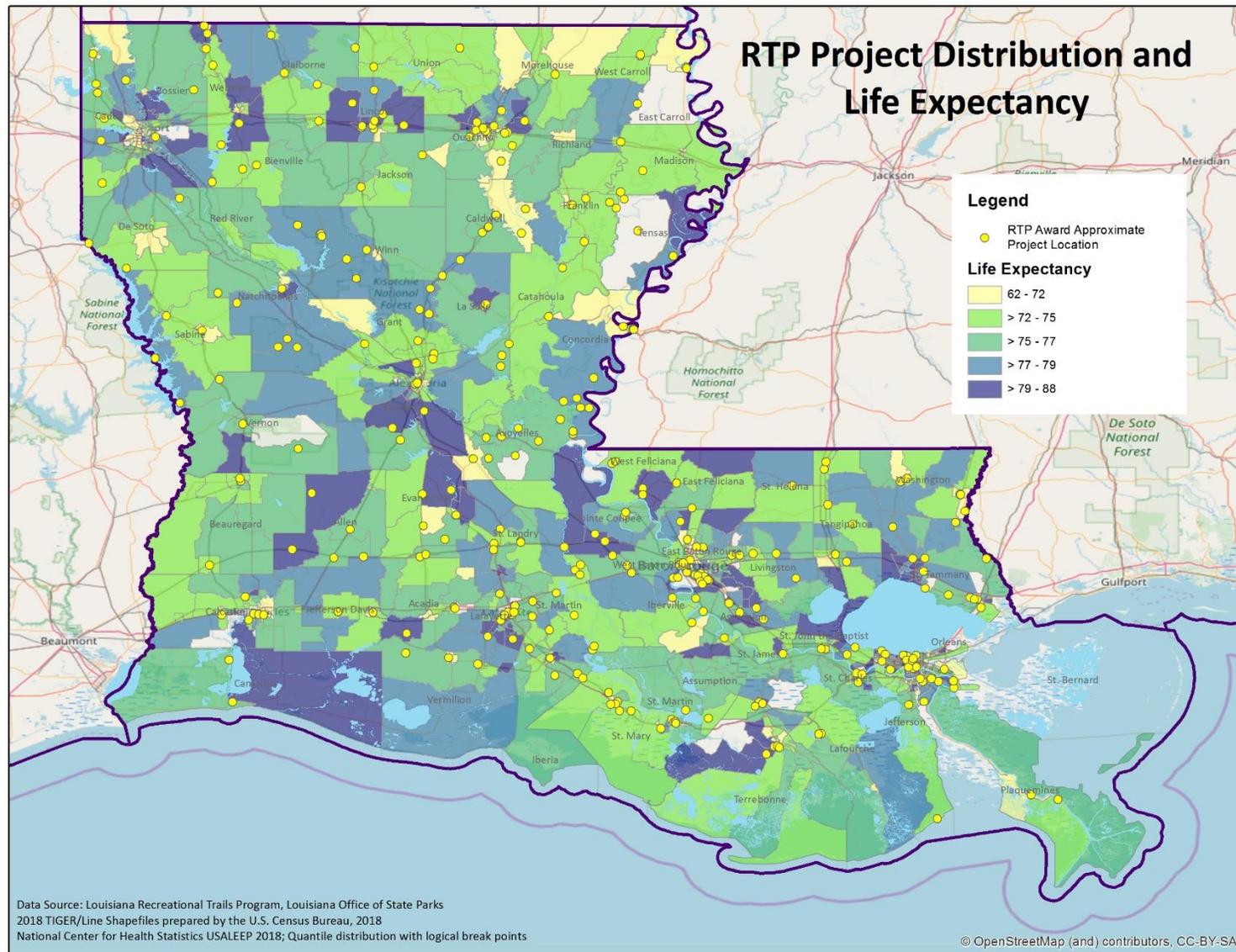


Figure 15: LRTP Project Distribution and Life Expectancy

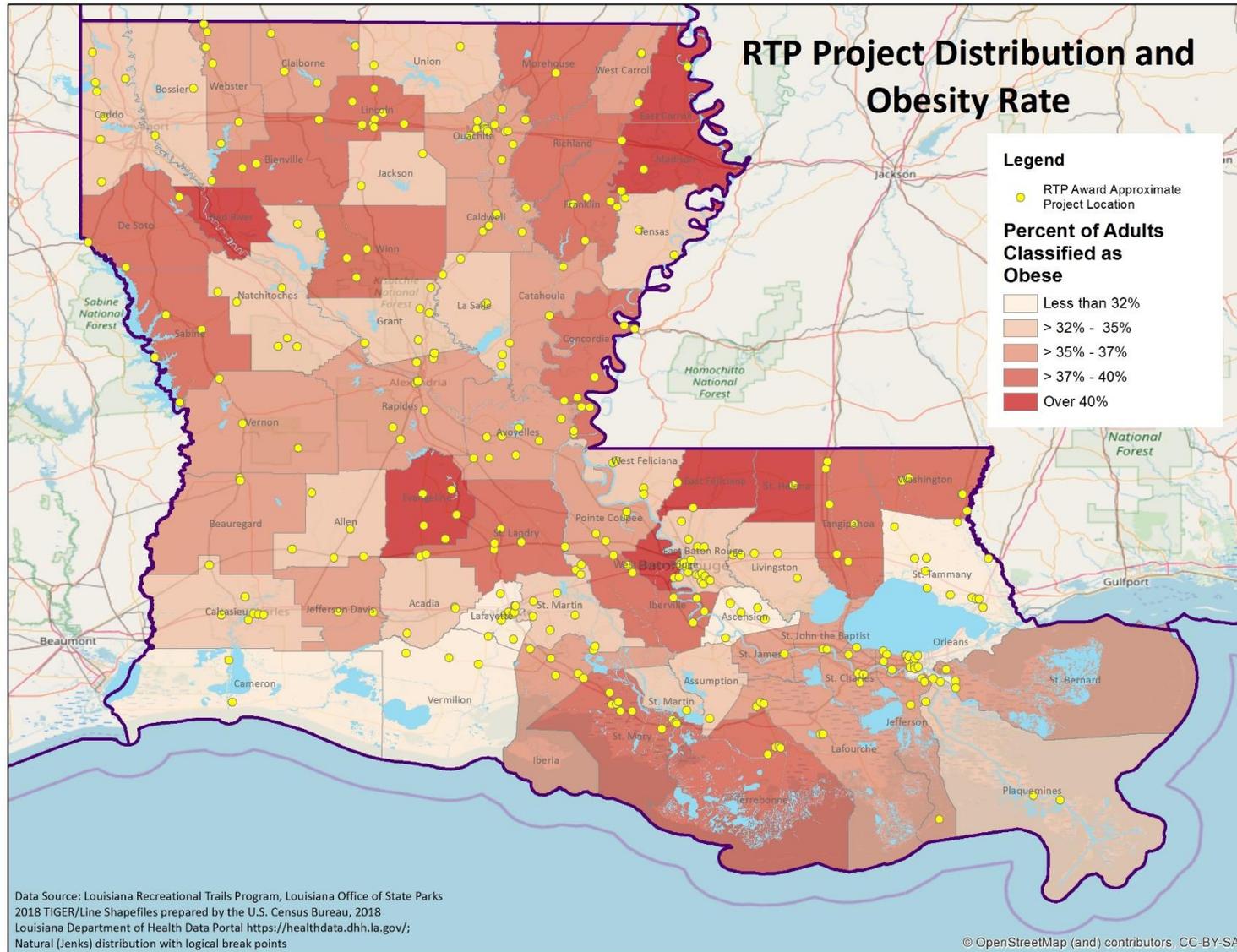


Figure 16: LRTP Project Distribution and Obesity Rate

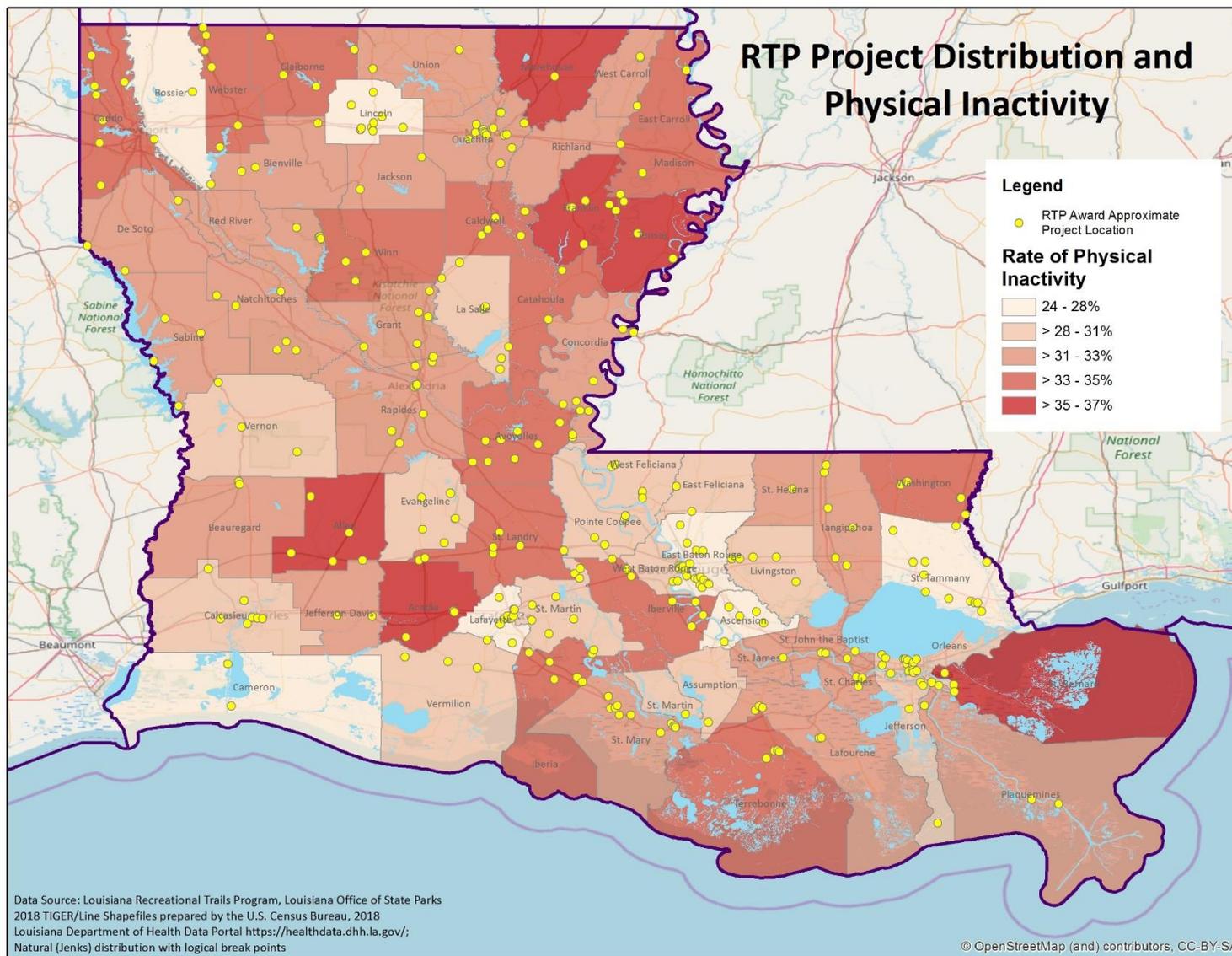


Figure 17: LRTP Project Distribution and Physical Inactivity

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Louisiana RTP has effectively awarded and developed trails projects of all kinds throughout the state, in large urban communities as well as small towns and rural areas. To date, the program appears to have been most effective in meeting demand for local fitness trails, major phased linear trails projects connecting regions and sections of localities (such as the Mississippi River Trail, Louisiana Trail, and Tammany Trace), and expanding and improving motorized recreation opportunities (especially in wildlife management areas). In recent years, interest in and opportunities to invest in water-based paddle trails appear to be on the rise, as have on-street urban corridor projects. The current estimated 73% of Louisiana residents who are within five miles of an LRTP project is a strong starting point from which to grow. Evaluation of the types of trails constructed in different regions, however, indicates that there may be considerable latent demand for trails in the western, northern, and central regions of the state, as a substantially smaller share of residents in these regions have convenient access to local LRTP trails. Moreover, motorized trail projects are somewhat underrepresented in some regions, and there is considerable opportunity for the expansion of designated water trails and supporting facilities statewide.

Importantly, different types of trails draw users from different catchment areas: a local fitness track in a park, for example, may mainly be of use to those in the immediate surrounding community, whereas a major hiking or bicycling trail, or an ATV park/trail network may draw visitors from all over the state and beyond. A series of trails which connect to one another, and to community destinations, moreover, will likely encourage more active transportation activity for everyday use than will a facility which can only be accessed deliberately, via automobile. Thus, the five-mile buffer metric should be interpreted primarily as a benchmark to track overall progress and not as a conclusive indicator of success.

The LRTP has demonstrated a commitment to supporting trails development in lower-income communities as well as those with sizeable populations of older residents, but could benefit from an additional focus on reaching underserved communities of color in terms of both ensuring convenient access to facilities, and encouraging trails use by populations known nationally and locally to often be underrepresented in outdoor recreation and on trails. Similarly, encouraging project development (particularly for non-motorized trails projects) in communities with less favorable health indicators could aid in advancing state goals for healthier, more active and fit communities.

As noted above, this analysis represents an initial step toward developing a trails database that can support the identification of both gaps in current trails access and opportunities to support future investment that will provide maximum community benefit. Additional research is needed to operationalize these findings, such as by developing a health equity scorecard by which to quantify the relative potential impact of a proposed project and/or identify communities of interest where outreach, and technical assistance may be needed to support and encourage proposal development. In addition, the process of mapping trails projects, both LRTP-supported and otherwise, is ongoing. This evaluation, based on a single point representing each project/trail, represents a best-effort with currently available data. Ongoing efforts to develop a consolidated linear layer representing the full and exact parameters of each trail should continue, beginning with all new LRTP projects and eventually encompassing all known trails facilities in the state. This should be facilitated through the development of a framework for coordinated public input, so that local governments, trails managers, and other stakeholders with local knowledge of non-LRTP facilities can assist in efficiently building the database. As this database and resulting spatial layers are expanded and refined, this analysis should be revisited to update the benchmark calculations herein, and to track the state's progress toward the development of a diverse range of accessible, high-quality trails facilities for current and potential trails users of all ages, abilities, and outdoor recreation interests.

Trails User and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

This section summarizes the results of two surveys conducted in July/August 2018, resulting in over 1,000 responses from trail users of all kinds from all over the state, from hikers and cyclists to ATV riders to mountain bikers to paddlers to birdwatchers, as well as stakeholders directly involved in trails planning, implementation, and operations. Respondents to these surveys provided insight about what Louisianans love about the trails in their communities and around the state and how they use them, as well as what residents would like to see more of or improvements to in years to come, including funding priorities, implementation barriers, opportunities for program enhancement, and external funding source ideas. Full survey results, as well as the survey instrument text, are found in Appendices B and C.

Stakeholder and Trails Operator Summary Findings

The stakeholder/trails operator survey was distributed to the LRTP Advisory Committee, as well as to a compiled list of over 200 contacts representing each community in which an LRTP grant has been awarded. This list was compiled by identifying one or more likely relevant contacts (e.g. parks and recreation, public works, and/or planning departments) in each parish and/or municipality which has served as the lead applicant on an LRTP grant awardee as well as representatives of non-profit, advocacy, economic development, and educational institutions associated with LRTP projects, either as grant applicants or as entities known to be involved with the operation, maintenance, or programming of LRTP-supported facilities. Surveys were distributed to this list via email, and recipients were encouraged to share the survey link with colleagues whom they, in turn, identified as being appropriate respondents (if other than or in addition to the recipient).

From this distribution, 26 surveys were fully or substantively completed, representing all of the state's planning regions and a variety of governmental agencies and non-profit organizations involved in trails planning, construction, maintenance, operations, and/or programming. The majority of respondents represented the interests of primarily or exclusively non-motorized trails, although stakeholders involved in motorized trails also responded.

Survey respondents were asked to identify priorities for all trails within their planning region in several broad categories: trails construction and maintenance, trails and trailhead amenities, water trail and trailhead amenities, safety and security, and other (Figure 18).

Overall, the highest levels of priority (based on mean scores of all respondents) were assigned to:

1. Crime/personal security on trails
2. Protecting natural features/habitat
3. Routine Trail Maintenance
4. Enforcement of trail rules
5. Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
6. Trail info online (information about getting to the trail, etc.)
7. Litter abatement/trash can availability
8. More trails connecting communities and places
9. Promoting trail-related tourism
10. Promoting users' ability to experience the natural environment

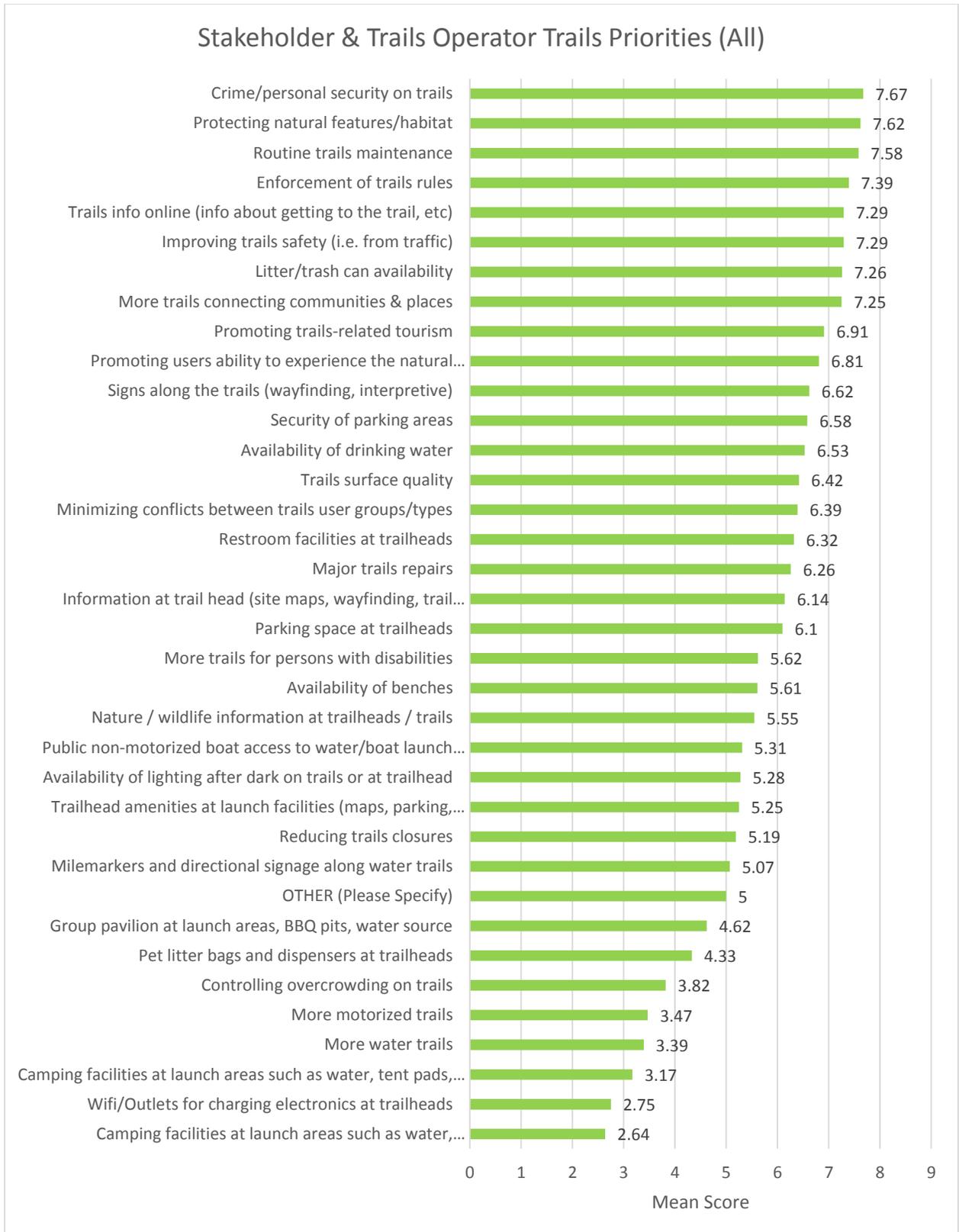


Figure 18: Stakeholder and Trail Operator Trail Priorities (All)

Major trails repairs, trails surface quality, restroom facilities at trailheads, and security of parking areas also arose as top priorities for many respondents (based on median score responses). Different regions of the states (as well as different stakeholder groups) have differing assets, needs, and characteristics, which are reflected throughout the survey. Notably, despite receiving the overall highest mean score, crime and personal security emerged as a top-three priority for only Region 8, reflecting the Top regional priorities identified for each region include:

Region 1 (New Orleans area):

1. Routine Trails Maintenance
2. Improving trails safety (i.e. from traffic)
3. More trails connecting communities and places

Region 2 (Baton Rouge area):

1. Litter/trash can availability
2. Availability of drinking water (*tie*)
3. Restroom facilities at trailheads (*tie*)
4. Availability of lighting after dark on trails or at trailhead (*tie*)

Region 3 (Houma/Thibodeaux area):

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Routine Trails Maintenance
3. Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers)

Region 4 (Lafayette area):

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Routine Trails Maintenance
3. Reducing Trails Closures

Region 5 (Lake Charles Area²⁷):

1. Routine Trails Maintenance
2. Reducing Trails Closures
3. Security of parking areas
4. Enforcement of trails rules
5. Parking space at trailheads
6. Crime/personal security on trails
7. Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty etc.)
8. Promoting trails-related tourism
9. More trails for persons with disabilities
10. More motorized trails

Region 6 (Alexandria area):

1. Enforcement of trails rules
2. Protecting natural features/habitat
3. Trails info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)

²⁷ Note: only one respondent from this region was recorded, all listed were identified as the highest level of priority

Region 7 (Shreveport Area):

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Enforcement of trails rules
3. Trails info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)

Region 8 (Monroe area):

1. Promoting trails-related tourism
2. Crime/personal security on trails
3. Trails info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.) *(tie)*
4. More trails connecting communities and places *(tie)*
5. Security of parking areas *(tie)*

Among respondents who indicated an involvement or familiarity with motorized trails, specifically, trails maintenance was identified as the top funding need over the next ten years, followed by minimizing natural resource damage, and enforcing trails rules and regulations. For non-motorized trails (excluding paddle trails), trails maintenance was again identified as a top funding need for the next decade, followed by connecting trails into local walking and bicycling networks and larger trail networks. Finally, for paddle trails, respondents indicated that access to water, generally, is the most pressing funding need, followed by provision of parking and launch facilities and designation of waterways for non-motorized users only (Table 8).

Table 8: Top Three Trail Funding Priorities - Trail Operators/Stakeholders

| Top Three Trail Funding Priorities - Trail Operators/Stakeholders | |
|---|---|
| Rank | Funding Need |
| Motorized Trails | |
| 1 | Maintaining existing trails in good condition |
| 2 | Reduce natural resource damage near trails |
| 3 | More enforcement of rules/regulations in trail areas |
| Non-Motorized Trails | |
| 1 | Routine maintenance of trails |
| 2 | Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks |
| 3 | Connect trails into larger trail systems |
| Paddle Trails | |
| 1 | Public access to the water |
| 2 | Parking |
| 3 | Non-motorized boat launch facilities |

With respect to creation of additional opportunities to meet existing or anticipated demand via new trails investments over the next ten years, respondents overall indicated that walking/hiking, bicycling (hard-surface), and running are top priorities for their planning region. These priorities vary somewhat by region, with walking/day-hiking identified as a top priority in most of the state, hard-surface bicycling identified as a priority in Southeast Louisiana but mountain bicycling a greater priority elsewhere, and water trails activities prioritized in regions 2, 3, and 4. Motorized trails activities were identified as top priorities in regions 5, 6, and 7.

Respondents generally indicated that the Recreational Trails Program, including its staff and application process, has been effective in serving their agency and/or region's needs extremely well or very well over the last ten years, with fewer than 10% of respondents indicating dissatisfaction. Respondents also described key successes and challenges of the program's implementation to date (outlined below and detailed in Appendix B), including issues pertaining to the following broad categories:

- **Access:** Stakeholders almost universally cite a desire to expand access to trails through outreach, education, policy, infrastructure, etc.
- **Maintenance:** both minor/routine maintenance and major repairs after weather events, etc. were cited as critical logistical and financial barriers for many trail operators
- **Safety:** of trails themselves, at intersections with roads and highways, and, in some areas, from crime
- **Capacity:** Many jurisdictions cite a lack of capacity for planning and proposal development, as well as operational resources as barriers to trails network development in their region.
- **Data and evaluation:** insufficient data exists tracking trails usage or other post-construction assessment and respondents cited a need for more feedback to support planning and promotional efforts. In addition, more consolidated, public data about trails themselves (maps, etc.) is needed.
- **Coordination:** though many successful partnerships among agencies and organizations exist, additional opportunities for collaborative work exist, particularly in land acquisition (with several respondents citing a need for more federal, state, and/or private sector support - potentially fiscal or legislative - in purchasing or securing usage rights for potential new trail routes which intersect privately controlled property) and in expanding usage of existing trails to new user groups, and working with levee districts and other entities not typically focused on recreational facilities. Moreover, difficulties in interagency coordination are cited as creating project delivery delays.
- **Leadership:** a need exists for a clearer vision for trails, as well as political leadership prioritizing trails in order to advance local, regional, and statewide recreational trails projects and overall goals.

Public/Trails User Survey Summary Findings

The public, trails user survey was distributed to the same list of trails operators and other known stakeholders, with a request to pass it along to their constituents via any channels of communication convenient, such as listservs, newsletters, social media, etc. Ultimately, over 1,200 individuals initiated responses to the survey, with 956 responses substantively completed, representing at least 51 parishes and all planning regions in the state. Among these respondents, about half indicated that they are frequent trails users (at least weekly), with respondents reporting trails use anywhere from zero to 365 days in the last 12 months. On average, respondents indicated an average (mean) number of trails use days of 57 in the last year, with a median response of 25.

Walking/day-hiking, bicycling, and running/jogging were the most popular activities reported by survey respondents (when asked to indicate all activities for which they utilize Louisiana trails), followed by paddle/watercraft activities and motorbike usage. “Other” activities reported by Louisiana trails users included birdwatching, photography, scouting, and various other recreational and scientific pursuits. Notably, only 15% of respondents indicated participation in 2-wheel motorized trails activities and 8% in 4-wheel motorized trail activities (i.e. ATVs, UTVs), indicating that the interests of these user groups may be underrepresented. In addition, only a very small minority of respondents indicated equestrian activities (1.3%), suggesting gaps in the survey distribution and potential need for additional outreach in the future to underrepresented interest groups to assess specific usage patterns and needs.

Trail activities also vary by region, with greater interest in hard-surface bicycling in the more urbanized regions of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, in particular (and conversely, a greater apparent interest in mountain bicycling in Northern Louisiana), and significantly greater use of motorized trails in the central, south central, and northern regions of the state.

Respondents indicated that while they are generally satisfied with their ability to access trails for their preferred activities near their homes, and that the quality of trails is overall high, satisfaction with the variety of trails available in an average community is lower (Figure 19). Evaluated by region, overall satisfaction with trail proximity (extremely or somewhat satisfied) is highest in regions 5, 6, and 7, and lowest in regions 2, 3, and 8. Trail quality is perceived as highest by respondents in regions 6 and 7, and lowest in region 3. Satisfaction with trail variety exceeds 60% only in regions 6 and 7.

The majority of respondents (61%) indicate that opportunities to engage in their favorite trail activity or activities have increased over the last ten years, with approximately 13% indicating a decrease in trail opportunities or access (likely reflecting closures of certain key trail facilities as cited in survey responses).

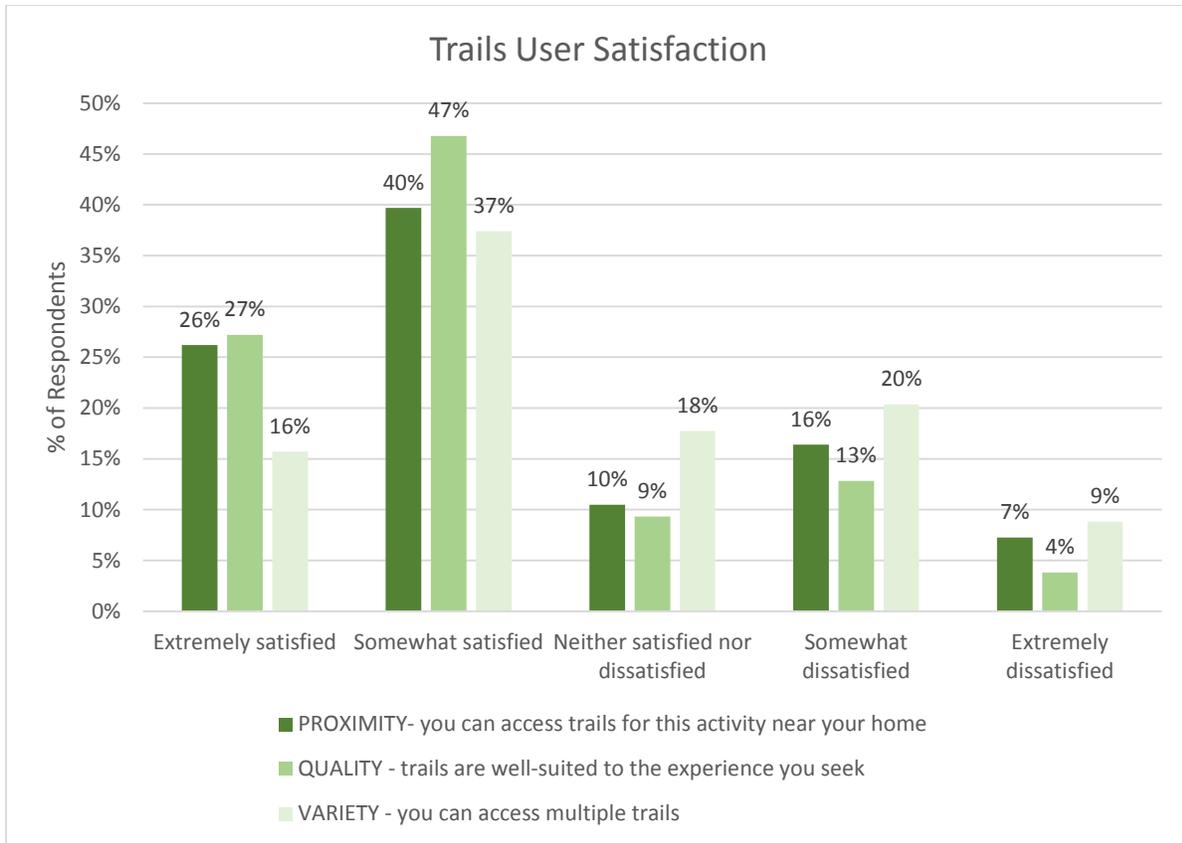


Figure 19: Trail User Satisfaction

Trails users were asked to identify their priorities for trails planning in their region over the next ten years (Figure 20), keeping in mind limited funding and land.

Across all categories, the top ten priorities indicated included the following:

1. Protecting natural features and habitat
2. Provision of trails information online
3. Routine trails maintenance
4. More trails connecting communities and places
5. Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
6. Promoting users' ability to experience the natural environment
7. Litter/trash can availability
8. Information at trail heads (maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty, etc.)
9. Major trails repairs
10. Parking lot security

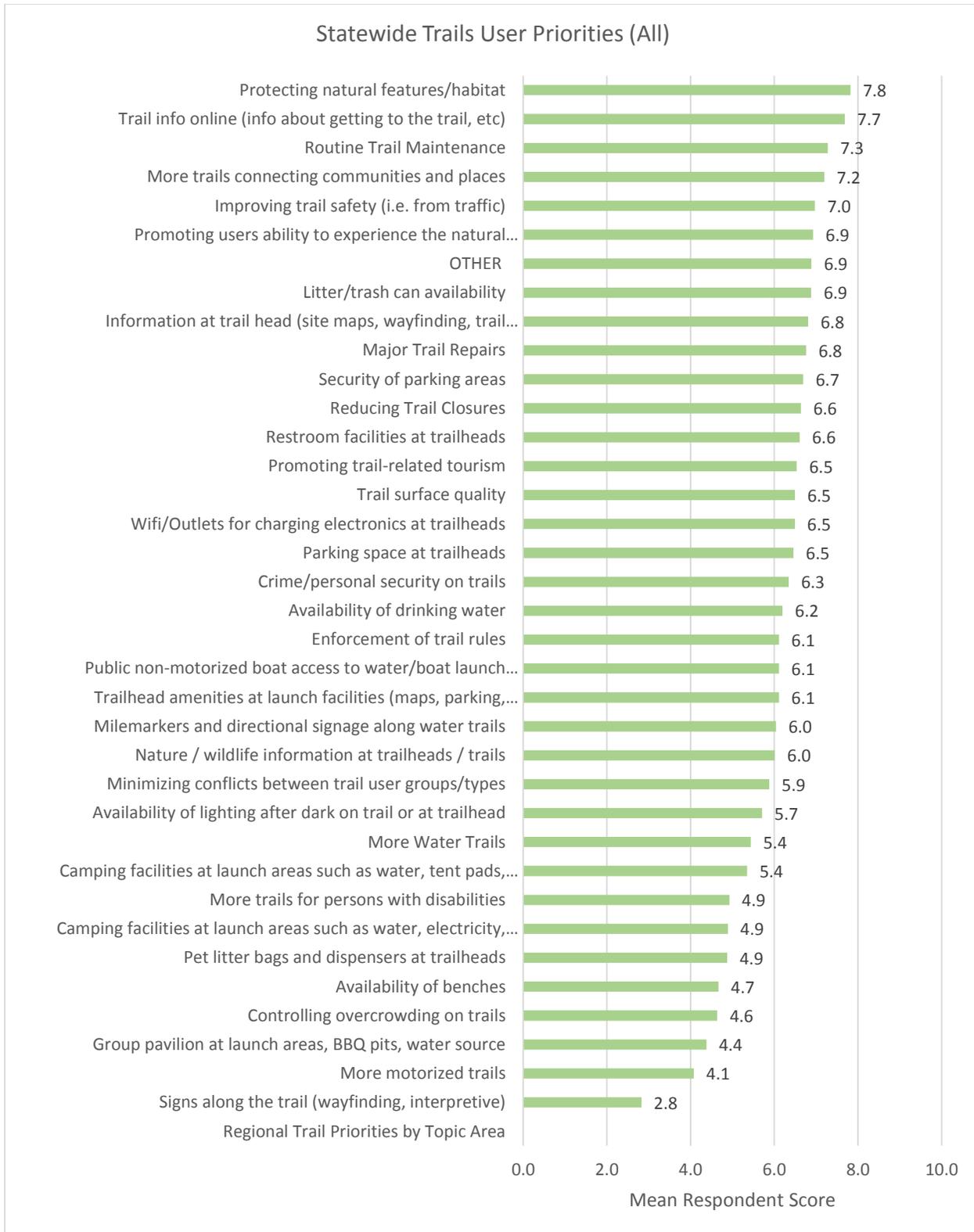


Figure 20: Statewide Trail User Priorities (All)

Regionally, following issues were identified as top priorities (with a mean respondent score of 7.5 / 10 or higher) in individual regions, reflecting both variation and a strong, consistent desire to protect natural resources and improve access to information about trails.

Region 1:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online

Region 2:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online
- Trails connecting communities and places
- Improving trails safety

Region 3:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online
- Reducing trails closures
- More motorized trails

Region 4:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online

Region 5:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online
- Trails connecting communities and places
- Litter/trash can availability

Region 6:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online

Region 7:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online
- Routine trails maintenance
- Reducing trails closures

Region 8:

- Protection of natural resources and habitat
- Provision of improved information about trails online
- Information at trailhead
- Promoting trails-related tourism

For motorized trails specifically, respondents were asked to identify their top three funding priorities for the next ten years. Trails maintenance emerges as the top concern, followed by increasing availability of single track motorcycle trails, and preservation of natural resources/minimizing damage in trails areas. Among users of non-motorized trails (excluding water trails), the top funding needs identified for prioritization over the next ten years included more trails, improved trails maintenance, and better connections within trails systems and into local pedestrian and bicycle networks. Finally, for those who indicated an interest in or use of water/paddle trails, a general call for increased access to waterways, particularly including boat launch facilities for non-motorized boaters, emerged, as well as clearer designation of water trails through signage (Table 9).

Table 9: Top Three Trail Funding Priorities - Trail Users

| Top Three Trails Funding Priorities - Trails Users | |
|--|---|
| Rank | Funding Need |
| Motorized Trails | |
| 1 | Maintaining existing trails in good condition |
| 2 | More single track off-road motorcycle trails |
| 3 | Reduce natural resource damage near trails |
| Non-Motorized Trails | |
| 1 | More trails, generally |
| 2 | Routine maintenance of trails |
| 3 | Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks |
| Paddle Trails | |
| 1 | Public access to the water |
| 2 | Non-motorized boat launch facilities |
| 3 | Designated trails with wayfinding/signage |

Demand exists for a wide variety of trails-related activities in Louisiana. Asked which activities the LRTP should prioritize with respect to creation of new trails opportunities over the next ten years to meet existing or anticipated demand for recreation, commuting, or other trails uses, respondents indicated the strongest support for walking/running and bicycling trails (23% of respondents), followed by paddle trails (12%), long-distance hiking trails (10%), and motorized trails (8% combined).

While walking/day hiking was identified as a priority activity in all regions of the state, bicycling priorities were split, with regions 3, 5, 6, and 7 prioritizing soft surface/mountain biking, and regions 1, and 2 (New Orleans and Baton Rouge) reflecting a preference for paved bicycle trails. Region 8 identified both as priorities. Backpacking was identified as a priority activity in regions 4 and 6, while paddling was cited as one of the most important activities in regions 1, 4, and 6. Motorized trail activities were cited as a top priority activity only in Region 3, however, as noted above this is likely reflective of stronger overall representation of non-motorized trails user community in the survey results. For full survey results as well as additional information about respondent characteristics, see Appendix C.

Implementation Successes

In addition to the summary survey results outlined above (and in greater detail in Appendices B and C), both surveys provided multiple opportunities for respondents to provide qualitative, open-ended feedback about the LRTP, trails infrastructure and operations, what Louisiana is doing well, and what could be improved. This section summarizes, in the context of national best practice research conducted about Recreational Trails Program implementation and trails network development and summarized above, some of the key successes of the LRTP to date.

Overall, both trails operators/owners and users indicate broad support for trails and the satisfaction with the LRTP as a key driver of and partner in trails development. Key successes of the LRTP identified by survey respondents related to trail planning, development, and operations include the following:

- Effective completion and/or phased expansions of major regional trail projects (e.g. Louisiana Trail, Mississippi River Trail, Lafitte Greenway, Bayou Teche Paddle Trail) developed in partnership with local governments.
- Developing successful partnerships between state agencies, local governments, and local community partners. As one respondent noted, “the State of Louisiana has been one of our best advocates and continues to be a strong voice for our needs.”
- Successful integration of trail linkages (i.e. protected shared-use paths) on bridges and at other chokepoints and gaps in trail facilities and networks.
- Improving and expanding motorized trails in Wildlife Management Areas for management/access as well as recreation.
- A perception of improved community health and safety as a result of trail investment
- Smooth and expedient project delivery and contracting relative to other State funding programs
- Success in using LRTP funds to leverage other funding sources which would not otherwise be accessible.
- Increasing community and local support and collaboration for trails projects over time.
- Proactive, strategic investments in trails improvements that reduce long-term maintenance costs.

In addition, several respondents specifically indicated that LRTP staff had been effective in supporting application development for communities and projects of all sizes, and the majority of respondents indicated satisfaction with the application process overall. Moreover, Louisiana’s [RTP application itself](#) includes a variety of criteria for holistically assessing project feasibility merit that are in close alignment with national best practices, including the following elements:

- Physical activity/fitness impacts
- Strength of community planning process
- Support and collaboration of stakeholder groups and interagency/public-private partnerships
- Community support for long term maintenance, etc.
- Local funding exceeds minimum
- Connections to other trails, parks, or recreation areas
- Active transportation value connections to neighborhoods, commercial areas, social/cultural/government centers
- Neighborhood revitalization impacts
- Variety of trail user types accommodated
- Trails promotion and education plans
- Commitment for ongoing maintenance
- Successful implementation of previous grants
- Impacts to health and education facilities
- Impacts to emergency service providers
- Impacts for disabled, minority, or elderly populations
- Economic impacts
- Utilities impacts
- Local economic/tax base impacts

- Impacts to Residential areas
- Environmental impacts

In total, the 380+ LRTP funded projects distributed over nearly 300 corridors, parks, forests, urban connectors, waterways, etc. represent a sizeable and important investment in Louisiana’s future as a place where residents and visitors are able to live active lifestyles, access work and other destinations, and play both in their own community and beyond. In addition, the LRTP has provided a strong foundation on which to build, integrate, and enhance future connections for people walking, bicycling, paddling, riding, or otherwise enjoying the state’s myriad outdoor resources.

Barriers and Opportunities

Concurrent with the program “wins” described above, stakeholders and trails users also reported a variety of challenges, concerns, and desired future improvements to continue to expand and enhance outdoor recreation and active transportation options around the state. Broadly, increasing trails access is a priority concern, whether through construction of new trails, expansion of existing trails to facilitate greater access, or in the case of some trails, expanding hours of operation for users (e.g. Audubon Wilderness Park, which is only accessible on weekdays) or expanding from seasonal access to year-round access. Stakeholders almost universally cite a desire to expand access to trails through outreach, education, policy, infrastructure, etc.: people want more trails, more access points to reach existing trails, and for many activities, they want trails that are closer to home. Needs differ by region and context: in regions with wilderness assets, more opportunities for backpacking were identified as a key desire and opportunity. In some regions, more mountain bicycle infrastructure is strongly desired. In urbanized regions, more safe connections to, within, and among cities emerges as a clear preference for many.

Beyond a desire to continue building new trails, challenges or barriers related to trails planning, development, and operations identified by survey respondents and outreach include:

- **Difficulties supporting trails maintenance:** both minor/routine maintenance and major repairs after weather events, etc. were cited as critical logistical and financial barriers for many trails operators, with grants typically funding only initial capital costs, rather than providing a stable source of ongoing maintenance funds. Relatedly, operational resources (such as for trails rangers), which are not provided through LRTP, are cited as a persistent area of need.
- **Difficulties identifying and/or securing land suitable for trails:** land acquisition is costly and difficult, and some stakeholders report that identifying potential publicly-owned or otherwise eligible corridors/land for trails construction is a barrier to planning and an opportunity for state leadership in terms of developing a statewide inventory of potential growth opportunities, supporting regional planning efforts, and providing technical assistance in navigating property issues and public/private partnership arrangements. State Legislation could be developed to make it easier to use levee tops, drainage rights-of-way, utility corridors, and other ROW’s which would make available many corridors that are now not feasible by clarifying the legal uses such corridors (i.e., by permitting travel corridors as an allowed right).²⁸ Legal clarification is also needed regarding use of federal levees.

²⁸ See [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#) and the [Pennsylvania Land Trust Association](#) for case studies and additional guidance on negotiating agreements and/or easements with utility companies for shared corridor use.

- **Community opposition to local trails:** although survey respondents were (unsurprisingly, given the user-group focused outreach method employed) overwhelmingly supportive of the LRTP and of trails, generally, stakeholders report that ongoing issues with private property owners who object, at least initially, to trail projects persists as a barrier to implementation. Additional outreach around the benefits of trails is needed. Perhaps more importantly, however, research suggests that the best way to build community support for trails is to get people to experience trails directly. Opportunities to reach communities of interest who are currently underrepresented and/or underserved can help to alleviate conflicts, while providing the support and encouragement needed to expand trails awareness and use to new audiences.
- **Insufficient local capacity and matching funds:** a number of local stakeholders cited a lack of capacity or resources to develop trails plans and prepare LRTP applications as a barrier, as well as a lack of access to local matching funds and, (later on), a lack of qualified, knowledgeable contractors for construction of high-quality, environmentally sensitive trails. Increased state support for local planning activities, as well as for education and training programs that will provide the builders and leaders of tomorrow, are needed. Meanwhile, assistance in identifying and/or developing (as by legislative action) suitable, sustainable sources for matching funds for grants and for stable, ongoing local funding to meet operational needs (including insurance, the maintenance of which is cited as a barrier in some communities) can help ensure that trails are maintained and managed effectively.
- **Concerns about trail user safety:** a cross-cutting concern across a variety of trails types and contexts, from the safety of trails themselves (especially motorized trails used by ATVs, UTVs, and 2-wheel or non-motorized users), at intersections with roads and highways (particularly in urbanized areas, and at system chokepoints such as water crossings), and, in some cases, from crime. Solutions to address these concerns range from infrastructure upgrades (widening trails, adding lighting or crossing improvements, etc.) to enforcement strategies, to outreach and education for trails users and the public.
- **Difficulties in interagency coordination:** though many successful partnerships among agencies and organizations exist, additional opportunities for collaborative work exist, particularly in land acquisition and in expanding usage of existing trails to new user groups, working with levee districts and other entities not typically focused on recreational facilities. Moreover, difficulties in interagency coordination and in navigating permitting processes and regulations (e.g. with US Army Corps of Engineers and National Forest Service partners) are cited as creating project delivery delays. As some jurisdictions are keenly interested in incorporating long-distance trails into levee systems, in partnership with the Levee Conservation Districts, these kind of inter-jurisdictional issues will no doubt continue. Ongoing state support in streamlining processes where possible and in providing guidance to smooth out difficulties is needed.
- **Lack of data and post-project evaluation:** insufficient data exists tracking trails usage or other post-construction assessment and respondents cited a need for more feedback (counts, surveys, etc.) to support planning and promotional efforts. Currently, there is not a “one-stop shop” source for trails maps and information in the state. The [RTP Database](#) synthesizes RTP project data nationwide for use by FHWA, states, RTP administrators, project managers, and the public, however, more specific, consolidated, useful public data about trails themselves (maps, etc.) is needed. Increased attention to and prioritization of project evaluation strategies in the LRTP

application process can help encourage local partners to plan for inclusion of these elements in support of both individual project success and statewide goals.

- **Lack of trails information and marketing:** Many respondents indicated that they simply don't feel like they know where trails are, either in their own community or in neighboring regions. There is a clear need to provide tools to help residents and visitors explore their options with information about trails routes, conditions, etc., as well as to publicize both existing and potential trails to new audiences, including older, youth, and minority populations, and for new uses such as expanding awareness and use of National Wildlife Refuge trails for non-hunting purposes, or more effectively promoting birdwatching trails, paddle trails, and other recreational activities experiencing growth.
- **Lack of overall vision and funding for trails:** Finally, a need exists for a clearer overall vision for trails, as well as political leadership prioritizing trails in order to advance local, regional, and statewide recreational trails projects and overall goals. Many states have developed future trails maps indicating key priority projects that link communities, regions, and even states, and/or provide more equitable access to all types of trails and for all communities. This strategic plan represents a step toward providing that vision and outlines several key steps toward fulfilling the state's goal of providing a diversity of safe, accessible, high-quality outdoor recreation and active transportation options statewide through continued implementation of the Louisiana RTP. In order to achieve long-term goals for the state's trails, however, additional state and/or local funding is critical to supplement the limited federal funds allocated to LRTP. Trails advocates, with the support of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, should consider developing a legislative platform in support of trails that advocates for full funding of the Recreational Trails Program at the federal level, directs state funding toward trails projects to supplement federal grant awards, and encourages the development and coordination of local initiatives and public-private partnerships to leverage existing resources.²⁹

²⁹ Legislative advocacy can take various forms, from the publication of a legislative platform such as that developed by the [Greenways Foundation of Indiana](#) or [Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota](#), or formation of a [state legislative caucus](#). Legislative actions pertaining to trails may involve appropriations bills or nonappropriation bills addressing [liability, accessibility, connectivity, planning, land acquisition, maintenance](#), and more.

Draft Statewide Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The findings of the planning and evaluation activity described above are synthesized in the goals, objectives, and strategies or actions summarized in this section, intended to guide the actions of the LRTP, the Advisory Committee, and all agencies and organizations involved in the planning, development, construction, operation, maintenance, and/or programming of current and future Louisiana trails.

Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Strategic Plan:

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1 - Leadership:

Strive to provide excellence in leadership and guidance in promoting the development of trails and trails-related programs with local, regional, and private or non-profit partners statewide

| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
|---|--|----------|
| Objective 1: Be accessible and transparent in program administration and implementation | | |
| Continue to work with local, regional, state and federal agencies, non-profit and for-profit organizations to coordinate and improve trails in Louisiana | Number of external entities engaged with LRTP Advisory Committee and grant projects | Ongoing |
| Publish regular reports on grant administration, program accomplishments, and progress on strategic goals | Brief (2-page) annual program update | Annual |
| Communicate expectations for grant-funded projects at all phases, from application to post-completion assessment | Updated LRTP applicant guide | Ongoing |
| Periodically review grant application and award criteria to ensure selection process remains inclusive, fair, and open, and to respond to stakeholder feedback and identified statewide needs | Diversity of grant recipients; Awardee satisfaction with grant administration and project delivery | Annual |

| Objective 2: Provide technical resources and support to all Louisiana communities | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| Provide guidance and technical assistance, especially for small and rural jurisdictions, in trails planning, design, construction, and maintenance of all types of trails | Technical assistance planning kits; participation in local planning meetings (where feasible) or distribution of information about benefits of and opportunities for trails | 1-2 years |
| Provide best practice resources to public and private OHV facility operators in trail construction focused on environmental protection | Distribution of information about recommended construction and design practices to engineers and managers involved in trail construction and operation | 1-2 years |
| Encourage and guide the development of local trails and/or pedestrian and bicycle plans and support trail-related planning processes | Number of trails plans (or related, including pedestrian and/or bicycle plans) | 3-5 years |
| Objective 3: Encourage public/private partnerships for trails projects | | |
| Facilitate connections among public and private sector stakeholders (governmental entities, landowners, recreational user groups, etc.) involved in trails planning, development, management, and maintenance | Number of public-private partnership projects | Ongoing |
| Coordinate communication across jurisdictional boundaries by connecting stakeholders to one another | Number of multi-parish/multi-region projects | Ongoing |
| Support state land management agencies in communicating protocols and recommendations for ensure effective management and limited access interruption to grant recipients | Disseminate protocols and best practices for land management developed/updated by involved agencies | 1-2 years |
| Objective 4: Encourage and guide incorporation of trails facilities into other types of infrastructure projects, e.g. levees, drainage, coastal protection | | |
| Working with DOTD and other relevant agencies, provide input in and disseminate general standards and design templates or guidelines for various types of trails and contexts | Publication of facility specifications and standards | 1-2 years |
| Review laws, policies, and practices that directly or indirectly impact trails development and, if necessary advocate for changes to facilitate improved coordination | Number of Legislative, policy, or procedural changes identified and addressed | 1-2 years |
| Advocate for inclusion of trails in land use and transportation planning efforts and encourage co-location of trails within existing and future utility easement, rail, roadway, and levee corridors as appropriate | New trails opportunities identified in adopted plans | Ongoing |

| Goal 2 - Trails Network Development: | | |
|--|--|-----------------|
| <i>Develop safe, equitable, accessible networks of motorized and non-motorized trails that connect to one another and/or to, through, and among neighboring communities.</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Prioritize the expansion of the statewide trails network | | |
| Continue to fund a diverse and balanced range of trail infrastructure projects that includes new facilities, phased expansions, and rehabilitation efforts | Number and mileage of trails, by type | Ongoing |
| In partnership with local advocates and agencies, work toward the development of a visionary system map of statewide motorized and, non-motorized trails, including paddle trails | Future trails map | 1-2 years |
| In recognition of the unique needs and characteristics (e.g., tourism potential, environmental context and sensitivities) of paddle trails, identify best practice criteria for developing paddle trails and review LRTP application to ensure that strong proposals for water-based trails are encouraged | Develop and disseminate best practices for water-based trails | 1-2 years |
| Expand the number of areas available for legal OHV, bicycle, and equestrian use through continued outreach to and communication with land owners and support of legislative efforts to increase funding and/or address other barriers to development | Number and mileage of trails, by type | Ongoing |
| Protect access to trails and leverage land conservancy resources by supporting (through educational materials, technical assistance, and stakeholder coordination) local efforts to acquire land for public access, in accordance with Louisiana's Uniform Code | Acreage of open space/ROW acquired or preserved by partner entities | Ongoing |
| Objective 2: Prioritize Increasing Trails Network Connectivity | | |
| Prioritize trails development that supports active lifestyles by connecting people to employment, schools, and other destinations | Number and mileage of trails that connect to on-street active transportation facilities and/or destinations, by type | Ongoing |
| Prioritize trails development that connects parks and open spaces/natural areas to residential areas and to one another | Number and mileage of trails that connect to parks and open spaces/natural areas | Ongoing |

| | | |
|--|--|-----------|
| Provide information to project sponsors about trails planning to encourage local plan development and regional coordination | Number of trails plans (or related, including pedestrian and/or bicycle plans) | Ongoing |
| Establish criteria to help identify priority trails network corridors that cross jurisdictional boundaries and/or form key regional trails | Future trails map | 1-2 years |
| Identify key network gaps and chokepoints where strategic investments will yield significant network effects and utilize the trails grant process to prioritize and address these gaps | List of priority gaps/connection opportunities | 1-2 years |
| Objective 3: Prioritize the Expansion of access to trails for users of all ages and abilities | | |
| Promote the expansion of the number of access points for existing trails (e.g. trailheads, boat launches) | Number of trailheads/boat launches | Ongoing |
| Identify (in terms of geography and demographic characteristics) populations who lack convenient access to a variety of trail types and prioritize building new trails in locations that serve these communities | Number of population within 5 miles of a trails facility (Current SCORP identifies current benchmark of 79%) | 3-5 years |
| Prioritize accessibility of trails for persons with disabilities, children, and older adults | Guidance for accessible trails; % of trails that are ADA accessible | 3-5 years |
| Promote trails that are safe and inclusive for all current and potential future users | User survey | 3-5 years |
| Evaluate opportunities to expand trails access for emerging or growing user groups (e.g. stand-up paddling, BMX, urban cycling) | Research memo documenting needs | 1-2 years |
| Objective 4: Enhance Trails User Experience | | |
| Support local efforts to enhance trails experience with trailhead and trailside amenities/support facilities where lacking | Inventory of enhancements to signage, potable water, restrooms, parking, etc. | Ongoing |
| Support the development of local inventories of maintenance needs and provide guidance to address critical deficiencies by seeking out grants, partnerships, and volunteers | Inventory of maintenance needs | 1-2 years |
| In partnership with involved state and local agencies (e.g. LDOTD), support communication of design guidelines for standardized signs and symbols for use on Louisiana trails | Compile FHWA, DOTD, and AASHTO guidance pertaining trails and disseminate | 1-2 years |
| Encourage interpretive signage to denote natural, historical, and cultural features of trails | Number of enhancements installed | Ongoing |
| Provide guidance on improving litter management through facility improvement (i.e. trash cans) and management (e.g. clean up day events) | Number of enhancements installed; participation in events | Ongoing |

| Goal 3 - Trails Management and Operations: | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| <i>Continue to advocate for high-quality trails systems that balance and meet the needs of all trails users</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Improve trails safety | | |
| Evaluate issues pertaining to crime and personal safety on trails and trails support facilities (e.g. parking lots) identify countermeasures to increase perceived and actual security for users | Number of incidents; user survey | 1-2 years |
| Support programs intended to promote safe trails use (e.g. OHV safety training and resources, water safety) | Number of incidents; new resources developed | Ongoing |
| Support the prompt repair and rehabilitation of damaged trails | Number of rehabilitation projects | Ongoing |
| Continue to support safe, practical connections through and between communities within multi-modal transportation systems, following a context-sensitive "Complete Streets" approach | Number and mileage of "complete streets" on-street projects or intersection improvements | Ongoing |
| Support implementation of safety features on new and existing trails (e.g. warning signage, crossing signals, emergency response infrastructure, lighting) | Number of enhancements installed | Ongoing |
| Partner with motor sports and recreation businesses to educate vehicle buyers or renters about safety and environmental stewardship | New resources developed and disseminated | 1-2 years |
| Objective 2: Encourage the expansion of multi-use trails and dedicated-purpose that balance the needs of various user groups and modes | | |
| Work to identify and resolve conflicts between land/property owners and trails users & advocates | Documentation of issues addressed | Ongoing |
| Disseminate information about best practices for building and managing trails of different types and in varying contexts to highlight user needs for trail experiences in urban, rural, and natural areas | Publication of facility specifications and standards | 1-2 years |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Promote multiple-use management of motorized trails to maintain safety, protect natural resources, and meet needs of all trails users, including existing or potential non-motorized users (e.g., upgrading trails to safely serve UTV users; facilitating safe hiking on OHV trails) | New resources developed and disseminated | 1-2 years |
| Anticipate the needs of emerging user groups and new forms of recreation or transportation (e.g. e-bikes, scooters) that will attract new users and present new challenges for managers | Research memo documenting needs | 1-2 years |
| Prioritize funding of projects that serve multiple user groups | Number of multi-use projects | Ongoing |
| Prioritize funding of projects that proactively address safety | Amount allocated to safety enhancements | Ongoing |
| Objective 3: Work collaboratively to address trail-related challenges, problems, and needs | | |
| In partnership with LRTP Advisory Committee, convene motorized trail managers and motorsport user group leaders to focus on OHV-trails issues and advance dialogue and solutions for user conflicts on motorized trails | Document detailing meeting outcomes and next steps | 1-2 years |
| In partnership with LRTP Advisory Committee, review existing Louisiana code and evaluate whether legislative action (local and/or statewide) or policy clarification is needed to regulate trail use | Memo outlining any legislative or policy needs | 1-2 years |
| In partnership with LRTP Advisory Committee and/or trail advocacy groups, develop and distribute educational materials about appropriate trail use, environmental stewardship, and trail etiquette | New resources developed and disseminated | 1-2 years |
| In partnership with LRTP Advisory Committee, investigate causes for trail interruptions and closures and potential threats to existing trails, and identify potential remedial or preventive actions to preserve access and safety | Memo documenting identified issues | 1-2 years |
| Work with recreation managers (e.g. WMA rangers and NWR rangers) to improve data and information about trails on state and federal lands, priorities for maintenance or construction, etc. | New inputs for trails database | Ongoing |
| Conduct periodic surveys and other data collection efforts to maintain up-to-date information about trail user trends and needs and integrate with SCORP public participation efforts | Updated SCORP | 1-2 years |

| Goal 4 - Trails Sustainability and Environmental Impacts: | | |
|--|--|-----------------|
| <i>Emphasize sustainable trails that are designed and constructed with sustainability as the guiding principle, and serve as assets in efforts to protect sensitive species and habitat, and improve overall regional resilience</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Build durable, sustainable, and context-sensitive trails that support increased community resilience | | |
| Communicate expectations for grant funded projects for sustainability and environmental protection | Updated LRTP applicant guide (Last updated 2018) | Ongoing |
| Promote the use of environmentally sustainable materials and construction methods | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Emphasize responsible stewardship during all phases of trails development and use and prioritize trails development that is environmentally sustainable | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Coordinate with partners and stakeholders to plan and construct trails so as to minimize repair and maintenance costs from reasonably anticipated events such as flooding | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Identify opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure elements (e.g. permeable pavement, bioswales, etc.) into trail design and recognize these in project selection | Number of green infrastructure elements completed | Ongoing |
| Identify opportunities to integrate trails projects into efforts to mitigate impacts of coastal erosion, flooding, and other climate issues | Number of coordinated multi-sector projects | Ongoing |
| Promote funding opportunities for conservation projects that may be used in coordination with trails projects | Number of coordinated multi-sector projects | Ongoing |

| Objective 2: Support wildlife and habitat protection | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Evaluate processes for assessing wildlife impacts and mitigation needs to identify whether current biological and environmental reviews are effectively protecting habitats, for both federal and non-federal lands | Memo outlining policy/regulatory needs | 1-2 years |
| Prioritize projects that directly support the preservation of natural lands and open spaces | Updated LRTP applicant guide | Ongoing |
| Identify and promote opportunities (e.g. best practices) to coordinate habitat conservation (e.g. through land acquisition) and trails development | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Promote the conservation or restoration of native plants along trails corridors, and the removal of invasive species | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Objective 3: Promote trails as environmental education tools | | |
| Identify educational priorities pertaining to environmental stewardship on and around Louisiana trails (including water resource issues) and develop and distribute relevant educational materials and media | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |
| Identify needs specific to groups interested in conservation (e.g. hunting, fishing, birdwatching, etc.) and harness their support in advocating for trails | Number of partner organizations engaged in trails projects/programming | Ongoing |
| Highlight and promote local and agency successes in conserving natural and cultural resources through trails projects | Develop and disseminate annual 2-page program report/update | Annual |

| Goal 5 - Trails Promotion and Public Information: | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <i>Coordinate the dissemination and publication of conveniently accessible information about trails facilities and opportunities to enhance trail experiences, encourage new users to experience the state's landscapes in a variety of ways, and support trails advocacy</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Create centralized repository of accurate, up-to-date trails information | | |
| Update LRTP website with research, reports, and information about trails planning and funding processes and best practices | Updated and expanded website content | 1-2 years |
| Connect trails users to information about trails conditions, including information about closures, etc. | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Provide a platform for user-generated data collection and input/reporting | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Objective 2: Develop a statewide trails inventory and map | | |
| Continue to update and refine LRTP project map, and integrate non-LRTP trails into spatial database | Centralized trail information web page | 1-2 years |
| Publish interactive trails map online and link to relevant information | Centralized trail information web page | 1-2 years |
| Objective 3: Promote Louisiana Trails to residents and visitors | | |
| Develop and update lists of current and potential trails stakeholders, including government contacts, tourism agencies, business organizations, foundations, trails user groups, etc. | Updated database | Ongoing |
| In partnership with Advisory Committee and/or stakeholder groups, develop and promote a brief annual trails update to increase public awareness and for distribution to LA legislature | Brief annual program update | Annual |
| Develop unified messaging and branding for Louisiana Recreational Trails Program | Louisiana Trails branding suite (logo, messaging, etc.) | 1-2 years |
| Produce brochures and publications local communities can utilize to promote Louisiana trails and share with tourism boards, chambers of commerce, etc. | Media resources developed and disseminated | 1-2 years |
| Reach out to under-served groups and regions to understand barriers to trails use and needs and preferences of current and potential user groups | User survey; new groups and communities engaged | Ongoing |

| Goal 6 - Trails Advocacy and Collaboration: | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <i>Develop and encourage coordination and collaboration among trails and environmental advocates, educators, non-profits, and others to promote resource protection, education, and trails use opportunities</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Build volunteer capacity to support trails projects and management | | |
| Encourage trails managers to track and publicize the value added to trail networks by volunteers to encourage participation | Documentation of volunteer time and impact | Ongoing |
| Help promote and coordinate events to promote and celebrate trails (e.g. by sharing with database of contacts, encouraging elected official and media participation in events and volunteer opportunities) | Email/press releases, number of events held | Ongoing |
| Objective 2: Empower youth to become trails and resource advocates | | |
| Support expansion of programs and communication with Louisiana youth about trails recreation and conservation and identify opportunities for schools and youth-serving organizations to include trails activities into curricula or programming | Number of programs/students engaged | Ongoing |
| Encourage submission of youth service and conservation corps projects to LRTP by qualified groups | Number of projects funded | Ongoing |
| Engage youth in marketing efforts around trails, e.g. developing "benefits of trails," blog, and social media content | Number of programs/students engaged | Ongoing |

| Objective 3: Promote awareness of the benefits of trails | | |
|---|--|---------|
| Publicize the successes of the LRTP and promote the benefits of trails recreation for health, local economies, quality of life, and the environment | Brief annual program update | Annual |
| Promote trails-related training and employment opportunities | Distribution to trails stakeholder database | Ongoing |
| Promote findings pertaining to economic activity resulting from recreational trails (e.g. property values, tourism, etc) especially for rural communities | Brief annual program update | Annual |
| Objective 4: Build new cross-sector partnerships with an interest in trails | | |
| Encourage local and state health departments to partner with parks and recreation departments and other trails providers to promote health benefits of trails use | Number of health agencies engaged | Ongoing |
| Encourage Economic Development Organizations to include trails in programming and policy efforts to support active, economically vibrant communities | Number of EDOs engaged | Ongoing |
| Develop resources to encourage use of trails for schools, parks and recreation departments, and individual fitness programs, and include health and wellness information in trail maps and guides | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | Ongoing |

| Goal 7 - Funding: | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <i>Maintain adequate, stable funding for the planning, development, and management of trails and trails-related facilities to meet present and future demand</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Disseminate funding information and resources for trails stakeholders | | |
| Advocate for stable long-term state and federal funding for acquisition, development, maintenance, and operations of trail facilities | \$ allocated to LRTP, trails-related road projects | Ongoing |
| Provide guidance for funding land acquisition efforts and public private partnerships | Updated and expanded website content | 1-2 years |
| Objective 2: Encourage local initiatives for trails funding | | |
| Develop and maintain a "menu" of potential non-LRTP grant opportunities and funding sources or mechanisms local communities may seek to protect and grow trails networks and address maintenance backlogs | Updated and expanded website content | 1-2 years |
| Identify current policies and regulations around registration fees (for OHVs) and other forms of user-based revenue (all users) and identify opportunities for creating dedicated revenue streams for infrastructure, enforcement, education, and encouragement | Research memo documenting needs | 1-2 years |
| Investigate options for local and user-funded trails support and discuss and propose ideas to supplement LRTP funds for trails projects | Research memo documenting needs | 1-2 years |
| Objective 3: Encourage new trails partners to get involved in all phases of project development | | |
| Conduct outreach to foundations, businesses, developers, utility companies, transit agencies, health industries, etc. | Number of external entities engaged with LRTP Advisory Committee and grant projects | Ongoing |
| Advocate for inclusion of trails in utility right-of-way improvements, road projects, bridge projects, road or rail abandonment processes, levee upgrades, etc. | Number of multi-sector partnership projects | Ongoing |

| Goal 8 - Research and Data: | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| <i>Promote ongoing research that documents trails use, environmental impacts, and trails-based recreational trends, issues, and needs</i> | | |
| Strategy or Action | Output/Performance Measure | Timeline |
| Objective 1: Anticipate and inform SCORP process to incorporate trails needs | | |
| Conduct additional research into future trails demand, network gaps, and trails use patterns | User survey; trails database analysis | 1-2 years |
| Recommend additional data collection to be conducted as part of next SCORP update that will support trails development | User survey; trails database analysis | 1-2 years |
| Incorporate all SCORP GIS files for LWCF projects, paddle routes, trails and trailheads for integration into trails inventory and map | Updated spatial database | 1-2 years |
| Objective 2: Develop a statewide trails inventory and map | | |
| Continue to develop a regional and statewide inventory of existing, planned, and envisioned trails | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Compile local trails data from municipalities, parishes, and other land managers into one inclusive database and map | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Evaluate trails map to identify where connections can be made to leverage investments | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Publish the inventory for use by professionals as well as citizens and trail users | Centralized trails information web page | 1-2 years |
| Develop a database of state, municipal, and private open space to evaluate potential connections | Updated spatial database | 3-5 years |

| Objective 3: Conduct Trails impact research and intervention | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Collect data around trails-related economic and/or health impacts associated with trails use by residents and visitors | Impact Assessment Report | 3-5 years |
| Work with EDOs to identify areas of economic distress and target trails-oriented tourism and revitalization efforts | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | 3-5 years |
| Contract with a university to evaluate safety factors and issues related to crime on trails and evaluate overall impacts | Trail Safety Evaluation | 3-5 years |
| Research how to most effectively expand access to and use of trails for underserved communities (communities of color, low-income, people with disability) etc. | Resources/recommendations developed and disseminated | 1-2 years |
| Monitor and evaluate success of recent trails projects to inform future projects and publicize outcomes | Post-Completion Assessment Updates | Ongoing |
| Objective 4: Expand user data collection | | |
| Work with trails managers and other entities to develop protocols for recording trails data (counts, visitor logs, etc.) in a standardized format | Trail Use and Users report | 1-2 years |
| Seek and support additional data sources from local agencies, national organizations, universities, etc. | Trail Use and Users report | 3-5 years |
| Investigate opportunities to fund data collection from those who directly benefit from trail development (e.g. developers) | Trail Use and Users report | 3-5 years |

Implementation

Many of the actions and strategies described above reflect activities in which the Louisiana RTP is already engaged as a matter of routine. Others reflect new activities which may be undertaken internally within the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, some of these in conjunction with future updates to the Louisiana SCORP. Some actions are likely to be led by the program administrator, while others would be best implemented through actions of the LRTP Advisory Committee. A great many of the strategies above will rely upon the active engagement and participation of partner agencies and organizations at all levels of government in order to provide data and iterative feedback on projects and programs related to the LRTP and to collaborate on the ongoing development of a statewide vision for trails.

Finally, some recommended strategies will require the allocation of dedicated resources to support internal or externally-led research, evaluation, marketing, and/or planning efforts, for which additional funding must be sought. It is important to note that the goals, actions, and intended outputs described in this Strategic Plan are aspirational in nature given current program funding levels, and many will require support from other federal, state, and local agencies and entities as well as advocacy organizations and direct support from Louisiana's recreational trails system users to accomplish.

The following actions and timeline are recommended as near-term next steps toward implementation of this plan:

Year 1:

- Convene LRTP Advisory Committee to discuss and revise program plan
- Prepare recommendations for trails-related data/planning needs for consideration in upcoming SCORP update
- Continue efforts to complete and enhance statewide trails database and map
- Define resource needs for plan implementation and identify key partners and task leads
- Begin publishing brief (i.e. 2-page) annual reports summarizing LRTP implementation progress, success stories, etc for distribution to trails stakeholders and the Louisiana legislature
- Develop and initiate enhanced tracking of project implementation and outcomes (i.e. expand trails database to automatically include data points for new and recently completed projects)
- Establish, where possible, initial benchmarks for performance measures outlined

Year 2:

- Review LRTP application and develop enhanced LRTP applicant guide
- Develop online central trails information web page
- Convene technical committee to define and develop facility standards/best practice guidance
- Define strategy for statewide trails system vision development (i.e., development of an aspirational state trails map)
- Conduct follow-up outreach and research to grantees and communities to define priority connections, maintenance needs, new uses and users, etc.
- Begin to develop and disseminate outreach, education, and promotional materials around trails

While on-the-ground outcomes will take time to reach fruition, and some research-oriented tasks are longer term (5-10 year), it is anticipated that measurable progress toward all objectives outlined above will take place within the next 3-5 years, as reflected in the plan timeline for each action. An update of this plan is suggested at approximately year 5 to consolidate progress, evaluate new data, and include to include additional, follow-up actions toward full implementation of the goals and objectives as defined.

Appendices:

A. Inventory of Trails Plans

Trails/Active Transportation Plans - Louisiana

[Louisiana Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) (2009)

- Discusses rails to trails conversions, including Tammany Trace
- Cites importance of improving access to walking and bicycling for both transportation and recreation, and benefits to economic development and public health as key justifications for investment

[New Orleans Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#) (2014)

- Limited discussion of recreational trails-related facilities or facility types

[Alexandria/Pineville Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#) (2017)

- Cites importance of accessibility of trail facilities for all ages and abilities, as well as to encourage “interested but concerned” bicyclists who may be interested in bicycling on low-stress facility types only
- Documents Strava data indicating that roads connected to recreational trails (e.g. Kincaid Lake Trails, Red River Levee Trails) are more frequently logged by users, indicating demand for active on-street connections to recreational facilities
- Cites connection of trail facilities to other facilities, as well as maintenance and improvements to existing trails, as strategies under overall goal (goal 1) of providing a connected bicycle and pedestrian network
- Identifies trails as appropriate bicycle safety countermeasures
- Cites expansions to and connections to levee trail system, in coordination with Red River Levee district and property owners, as well as prioritization of transportation projects that connect to recreational resources, as strategies to improve regional quality of life for health, environment, and economic benefits (Goal 4)

[Baton Rouge Bicycle & Pedestrian Master + Safety Action Plan](#) **in progress**

- DOTD and BREC partnership to recommend a network of safe, efficient and equitable facilities that accommodate walking and bicycling for all citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish.
- The Plan will assess best practices policy and programs, review current design standards for new and/or improved infrastructure, utilize data to prioritize potential projects and serve as a guide to implement a successful pedestrian and bicyclist program, focusing on the needs of the community.

[Lafourche Parish Multiuse Path Master Plan and Feasibility Study](#) (2016)

- Overarching vision to create linkages among cultural, artistic, historic destinations in communities along Bayou Lafourche from Thibodeaux to Leeville: D'trail Lafourche
- Describes implementation for two phases of trail: Raceland to Bayou Lafourche Visitors Center, and from Mathews Government Complex to Lockport Community Park
- Emphasizes branding and community identity linked to trail; tourism opportunities

- Full implementation to require a mix of paved off-street trail, cantilevered boardwalk, and protected on-street bikeway
- Includes evaluation of [health and economic impact](#) anticipated as a result of implementation

[St. Charles Parish Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan](#) * *in progress**

- St. Charles Parish is currently working to create a Comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan to address existing deficiencies and to access further expansion of walking and bicycling infrastructure making the Parish a safer place for these activities.

[Shreveport-Caddo Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) (2016)

- Informs NLCOG Long Range Transportation Plan as well as Shreveport Citywide Network Plan
- Interested in Trail-Oriented Development, connections to nearby nature and habitat areas, and equitable access for all ages and abilities
- Considers levee district constraints and opportunities
- Connection of off-street trails with on-street bikeways is a key objective
- Recommends additional planning specifically to address development of a “connected, publicly accessible greenway trail network that interfaces appropriately with the on-street bikeway network” and supports ecological interests and tourism.
- Identifies opportunities to connect to University assets through parks and recreation planning and trails
- Recommends establishment of a Parks, Trails, or Bikeways Improvement Trust Fund to encourage and manage donated resources, along with establishment of Friends of the Trail groups

[St. Bernard Parish Bikeway & Pedestrian Plan Update](#) (2017)

- Identifies and defines shared-use trails as a key facility type for St. Bernard Parish for both transportation and recreational functions
- Identifies Mississippi River Trail (MRT) as key axis (5 phases, 11.3 miles) of proposed 46 mile parish-wide trail network, as well as 40 Arpent Trail (26 miles envisioned adjacent to 40 Arpent Canal)
- Phases 1 - 3 of MRT are funded to-date
- Identifies need to upgrade several bridges and trailheads to support and facilitate use of these two major trails

[Hammond Bicycle Master Plan](#) (2018, Adoption status unknown)

- Identifies key shared-use trail facilities through Hammond along Southwest Railroad Avenue, Old Covington Highway, CM Fagan Drive, JW Davis Drive, Range Road, Minnesota Park Road

[Lake Charles Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan](#) (2012)

- Identifies five potential city-wide trail priorities and provides diagrammatic overviews of each including any implementation activity and/or resources allocated to date:
 - o Perkins Ferry Trail from N. Railroad Ave to Perkins Ferry Park (2 miles)
 - o 1st Ave Trail from Railroad Tracks to 12th St (1.75 miles)
 - o Pithon Coulee Trail from Lakeshore Dr. to Common St (0.6 miles)
 - o Railroad Connector Trail from 1st Ave to 5th Ave (0.75 miles)
 - o 5th Ave Trail from 12th St to McNeese St (2.5 miles)

[Lafayette MPO 2035 Bikeway Plan](#) (2015)

- Highlights Atakapas-Ishak Trail as shovel-ready project
- Notes that there are several facilities where additional signage is primary need to render usable

[Lafayette 2035 MPO Pedestrian Plan](#) (2015)

- Cites health equity considerations for provision sidewalks and trails

[Jefferson Parish Master Bicycle Plan](#) (2013)

- Levee-top trails are integral to parish vision for recreation and transportation, but observes maintenance needs and improvements to access points, signage, and trail surface
- Trail closures due to construction have also been a concern
- On-street bikeway connections to levee trails are a top need, as are waterway crossings (Mississippi River, Harvey Canal)
- Identifies near-term projects including a multi-use path within Airline Drive, Power Blvd, and Monticello/17th Street Canal ROWs
- Connections to neighboring parishes are prioritized; total of 56 miles of greenway and 37 miles of side path facilities proposed
- Completion of levee greenway on western edge of parish recommended

[South Central Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#) (2013)

- Cites need for standardized access management policy for trail crossings
- Proposed trails include: Acadian Trail (Lafourche Parish boundary to LA 400); North Assumption Bike Trail along rail corridor from Ascension parish boundary to LA 70)
- Levee trails are key existing assets
- Full inventory of proposed facilities including distance, location, facility type, and cost estimate

[Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Master Plan for Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges](#) (2014)

- Details about each WMA in the state, including public access, facilities, and public uses permitted
- Notes importance of coastal and inland birding trails as an opportunity to diversify tourism, educate the public, and promote conservation, especially along the designated American Wetlands Birding Trail: infrastructure improvements including parking, trails, boardwalks, and observation platforms should be prioritized
- ATV/UTV trails are critical not only for recreation purposes, but for access for LDWF staff and crews for forest management; many ATV/UTV trails are seasonal (generally Autumn/Winter)
- Plans for increased number of access points (land and water) as well as new trails or expansions of existing trails, are outlined
- An average of 800,000 people use SMA and Refuge systems each year
- Private ownership of WMAs by forest product companies (10% of state's forests) represents a threat, as these may be sold at any time to private owners who lack interest in public use
- Development of urban refuges is an identified opportunity to increase exposure of young people and population centers to outdoor activities, such as the Waddil Outdoor Education Center.
- Data collection on users is through primary access point kiosks for self check-in

Statewide Trail Plans

Alabama - [Alabama SCORP](#) (2013)

Alaska - [Alaska Recreational Trails Plan](#) (2000)

Arizona - [Arizona Trails 2015](#)

Arkansas - [Arkansas SCORP](#) (2014)

California - [California Recreational Trails Plan \(2002\) and Progress Report](#) (2011)

Colorado - [Statewide Trails Strategic Plan](#) (2016)

Connecticut - [Connecticut National Recreational Trails Program Recreational Trails Plan](#) (2011)

Delaware - none identified

Florida - [Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan](#) (2018 - DRAFT)

Georgia - Georgia SCORP (2017) <https://gastateparks.org/SCORP>

Hawaii - [Na Ala Hele Hawaii Trail and Access System Program Plan](#) (1991)

Idaho - [Idaho SCORP](#) (2017)

- [Idaho Trails Map](#)

Illinois - [Greenways and Trails Comprehensive Plans](#) (links to local plans):

Indiana - [Indiana State Trails Plan](#) (2016)

Iowa - [Iowa Statewide Recreational Trails Plan](#) (1990)

Kansas - [Kansas State Trails Plan](#) (2008)

Kentucky - none identified

- [Kentucky Recreational Trails Map](#)

Maine - [Maine SCORP](#) (2014)

Maryland - none identified

Massachusetts - [Commonwealth Connections: A Greenway Vision for Massachusetts](#)

Michigan - [Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan](#) (2013)

Minnesota - [Minnesota State Parks and Trails System Plan](#) (2015)

Mississippi - [Mississippi SCORP](#) (2015)

- [Trailhead Map](#)

Missouri - [Missouri SCORP](#) (2013)

Montana - [Montana State Trails Plan](#) (2001)

Nebraska - none identified

- [Interactive Trail Map](#)

Nevada - none identified

New Hampshire - none identified

New Jersey - [New Jersey Trails Plan](#) (2009)

New Mexico - none identified

New York - [New York Statewide Trails Plan](#) (2010)

North Carolina - [Regional and State Trail Plans](#)

North Dakota - [ND SCORP - Recreational Trail Needs](#) (2018)

Ohio - [Trails for Ohioans: A Plan for the Future](#) (2005) (NOTE: New plan in development)

- [Map of Ohio's Trails](#)

Oklahoma - [Oklahoma SCORP](#) (2017)

Oregon - [Oregon Statewide Trails Plan](#) (2016)

Pennsylvania - [Pennsylvania Land and Water Network Strategic Plan](#) (2014)

Rhode Island - none identified

South Carolina - [State Trails Plan Goals](#)

South Dakota - [SD SCORP](#) - (2018)

Tennessee - [Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan](#) (2008)

Texas - none identified

Utah - [UTAH SCORP](#) (2014)

- [RTP Completed Project Map](#) (login required)

Vermont - [Vermont SCORP](#) (2014)

Virginia - [Virginia Outdoors Plan](#) (2013)

Washington - [Washington State Trails Plan](#)

- [Grant Application Data Tool and Trail Inventory](#)

West Virginia - [West Virginia Statewide Trail Plan](#) (2002)

Wisconsin - [Wisconsin Trails Network Plan](#) (2003)

Wyoming - [Wyoming State Trails Program Long-Range Plan](#) (2012)

B. Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Stakeholder Survey

Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Trail Operator & Stakeholder Survey Text

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey about Louisiana's trails!

The objectives of this survey, conducted in partnership with the State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Office of State Parks, are to obtain input about experiences with the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program (RTP), document outcomes to date, better understand regional and statewide trail network (including motorized, non-motorized, and water trails), funding priorities, implementation barriers, opportunities for program enhancement, and external funding sources for trail facilities.

Findings from this research will be synthesized into a draft Strategic Plan for the RTP for the next ten years, in alignment with guidance from the FHWA and the Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

This survey is intended for all stakeholders who are or have been involved with trail planning, funding (including but not limited to RTP grant receivership), construction, operation, maintenance, or programming. An additional survey targeting general trail users or interest groups who utilize trail facilities is [available here](#). Please feel welcome to share this survey with any relevant colleagues who are likely to have insight into these topics, and to disseminate the [Trail User survey](#) among your membership/constituency as you see fit.

Survey responses will be reported anonymously; provision of contact information at end of survey is optional but will aid in promoting enhanced communication about RTP news, resources, and funding opportunities.

Section A: General Information

What type of entity or organization do you represent?

- Municipal/Parish Parks and Recreation Department
- Municipal/Parish Public Works Department
- Other Municipal/Parish department or agency
- State agency
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Other regional entity
- Federal agency
- Non-profit organization
- Tribal government
- Other (List)

Using the map above (LOUISIANA PLANNING REGIONS BY PARISH, LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STATE PARKS), please identify the trails planning region(s) of the area that you represent or serve: (select all that apply)

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3

- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6
- Region 7
- Region 8

How would you describe your and/or your organization's role as a stakeholder in Louisiana trail facilities? *(Select all that apply)*

- Grant administration
- Trail planning or design
- Trails/trail support facility (trailhead, site furniture, parking, paddle launch) construction or engineering
- Trails/trail support facility (trailhead, site furniture, parking, paddle launch) operations or maintenance
- Trails-related programming
- Advocacy
- Other (Explain)

Are you primarily involved in working with motorized trails, non-motorized trails, or paddle trails? *(select all that apply)*

- Motorized (OHV, ATV, Motorcycle) Trails
- Non-motorized trails
- Paddle trails

Have you and/or your organization been directly involved in implementation of a project funded in any part by the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program (RTP)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Display Logic:

If "Using the map above, please identify the trails planning region(s) of the area that you represent or serve: (select all that apply)" Region X is selected:

Please select all RTP-supported trails in Planning Region X with which you or your organization is or has been involved (this list includes projects which may not have been completed yet, and may not be inclusive of all existing trail facilities in your region):

- (LIST ALL TRAILS IN REGION)
- OTHER (List)

One of the outputs of this study is to develop a map and database of trails statewide. Other than those listed above, are there any other trails you are involved with or are aware of in your region (whether or not they have been funded by the RTP)?

Please list and provide any available information that will help us ensure we include these facilities. (OPEN ANSWER)

Section B: Trail Priorities

The State of Louisiana is interested in increasing trail access for all user types across Louisiana over the next ten years. This section is intended to better understand trail funding priorities across the state.

Based on your experience with Recreational Trails in Louisiana, please share your and/or your organization's priorities for trails in your planning region over the next 10 years, keeping in mind limited funding and land.

For each action, slide the bar to indicate how high a priority that action is for you and your organization (Slider bar with scale from 1 to 10: 1 = not a priority at all, 10 = top priority)

1. Trail construction and maintenance

- Controlling overcrowding on trails
- Routine trail maintenance
- Major trail repairs
- Reducing trail closures
- Trail surface quality
- More trails for persons with disabilities
- More trails connecting communities and places
- More water trails
- More motorized trails

2. Trail and Trailhead Amenities

- Availability of drinking water
- Availability of benches
- Restroom facilities at trailheads
- Litter/trash can availability
- Pet litter bags and dispensers at trailheads
- Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty, etc)
- Signs along the trail (wayfinding, interpretive)
- Wifi/Outlets for charging electronics at trailheads
- Parking space at trailheads

3. Water Trail and Trailhead Amenities

- Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers)
- Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, tent pads, and picnic amenities (primitive)
- Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, electricity, sewer, picnic, bathhouse (improved)
- Group pavilion at launch areas, BBQ pits, water source
- Milemarkers and directional signage along water trails
- Public non-motorized boat access to water/boat launch facilities

4. Safety and Security

- Minimizing conflicts between trail user groups/types
- Security of parking areas

- Crime/personal security on trails
- Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
- Enforcement of trail rules
- Availability of lighting after dark on trail or at trailhead

5. Other

- Promoting users' ability to experience the natural environment
- Nature / wildlife information at trailheads / trails
- Protecting natural features/habitat
- Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
- Promoting trail-related tourism
- OTHER (Please Specify)

For motorized (OHV) trails specifically, which of the following do you anticipate being the **top three** funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- More single track off-road motorcycle trails
- Maintaining existing trails in good condition
- Reduce natural resource damage near trails
- Prioritize loop trails over out and back trails
- Trail maps/information
- More trails for ATVs
- More enforcement of rules/regulations in trail areas
- Prioritize long-distance trails
- Improve trail safety
- Other (please specify)
- Not applicable/Don't know

For non-motorized trails specifically (excluding water trails), which of the following do you anticipate being the **top three** funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- Connect trails into larger trail systems
- Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks
- Routine maintenance of trails
- More signs along trails/wayfinding
- Protection of natural features and wildlife habitat
- Repair major trail damage
- More trails, generally
- More trail maps/information
- Improve safety at trail crossings
- Other (please specify)
- Not applicable/Don't know

For water/paddle trails specifically, which of the following do you anticipate being the **top three** funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- Public access to the water
- Non-motorized boat launch facilities

- Restrooms
- Route maps/information
- Parking
- Designated trails with wayfinding/signage
- Waterways for non-motorized users only
- Improve trail safety
- Other
- Not applicable/Don't know

Which **activities** would you prioritize with respect to creation of new trail opportunities in your planning region in the next 10 years? These would be additional opportunities to meet existing or anticipated demand that do not detract from current opportunities. This includes trails for recreation, commuting, and other purposes. (Select all that apply)

- Walking/day-hiking
- Running/jogging
- Backpacking/long-distance hiking
- Bicycling - single-track/soft surface/mountain bike
- Bicycling - hard surface
- Horseback riding
- Roller skating/rollerblading
- Skateboarding
- ATV/4-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding
- Motorbike/2-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding
- Paddling/non-motorized watercraft
- Other

Does your municipality/parish/region have a trails plan and/or non-motorized/active transportation plan?

- Yes, Municipal or Parish plan
- Yes, regional or Multi-parish plan
- No
- Unsure

Are you aware of any future/planned trails that appear in planning documents for your region, or for which unfunded RTP project applications have been developed? If so, please list the name and general location of the proposed trail(s). (*open answer*)

Are there any other new trail opportunities that are important to you and/or your organization? (*open answer*)

Please describe any other priority issues, concerns, or needs pertaining to trails in your region or statewide. (*open answer*)

Section C: RTP Management and Project Delivery

Questions in this section are open-ended in nature and intended to better understand strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for the Louisiana RTP. Please answer in as much detail as you see fit.

- Who are the primary and secondary organizations involved in developing recreational trails applications in your region/jurisdiction? *(open answer)*
- Overall, how well do you feel that the Recreational Trails Program has served your agency and/or region's needs over the last ten years?
 - Extremely well
 - Very well
 - Moderately well
 - Slightly well
 - Not well at all
- What have been the primary successes or “wins” related to for trail planning, development, and operation as pertains to the RTP in your region? *(open answer)*
- What have been the primary challenges or barriers related to trail planning, development, and operation as pertains to the RTP in your region? *(open answer)*
- If you have applied for RTP funding, did you encounter any barriers to completing the application? *(open answer)*
- If you or your organization has received funding from the Louisiana RTP, how long did it take (or has it taken on average if multiple projects) to finish the project, from grant award to completion? Describe any barriers or delays to project delivery, if applicable. *(open answer)*
- If your involvement with the RTP began more than five years ago, has typical project delivery time increased or decreased in that period, in your experience? *(open answer)*
- Does any data exist in your jurisdiction documenting the number of users or usage patterns of the trail facility/facilities you are involved with (e.g. counts, surveys)? If so, please describe. *(open answer)*
- Has any other kind of post-construction evaluation of trail facilities taken place? *(open answer)*
- Do you have any specific concerns regarding trail safety in your region? (e.g. problematic trail crossings or crash hot spots, hazards relating to maintenance, etc.) *(open answer)*
- What kind of ongoing maintenance costs are associated with trails in your region and how are these supported? (funding source or entity, “friends” groups, etc.) *(open answer)*
- Other than the RTP, what other funding sources have been employed in your region or jurisdiction to support trail development or operation? *(open answer)*

- What are the primary barriers in your area to developing new trails? (*open answer*)
- What recommendations do you have to improve the effectiveness of the Louisiana RTP to more effectively serve your community, region, or the state as a whole? (*open answer*)

Contact information to be included in Recreational Trails Stakeholder Database for future outreach efforts, information, and research from the Recreational Trails Program (optional):

- Organization name
- Contact person name
- Contact person title/role
- Email address
- Phone number

Do you consent to being contacted with follow-up questions about specific trails in your area?

- Yes
- No

Stakeholder/Trails Operator Survey Findings

The stakeholder/trails operator survey was distributed to the LRTP Advisory Committee, as well as to a compiled list of over 200 contacts representing each community in which an LRTP grant has been awarded, including representatives of parks and recreation and/or public works departments, MPOs, non-profit organizations, contacts listed in grant applications themselves (for more recent awards), and state agencies known to have involvement in trails planning and outdoor recreation. The open-link survey was sharable by recipients, who were encouraged to share with relevant colleagues or other contacts within their community of interest. From this distribution, twenty-six surveys were fully or substantively filled out, representing all of the state's planning regions. It is important to note, however, that this sample of committed stakeholders may not be fully representative of the full range of experiences of stakeholders and trails operators in all areas and community types and/or of all critical interest groups. Rather, the qualitative findings are intended to inform preliminary recommendations in combination with other data sources. Continual maintenance of the preliminary stakeholder contact list, and ongoing dialogue with all those involved with trails planning, development, and operations is needed.

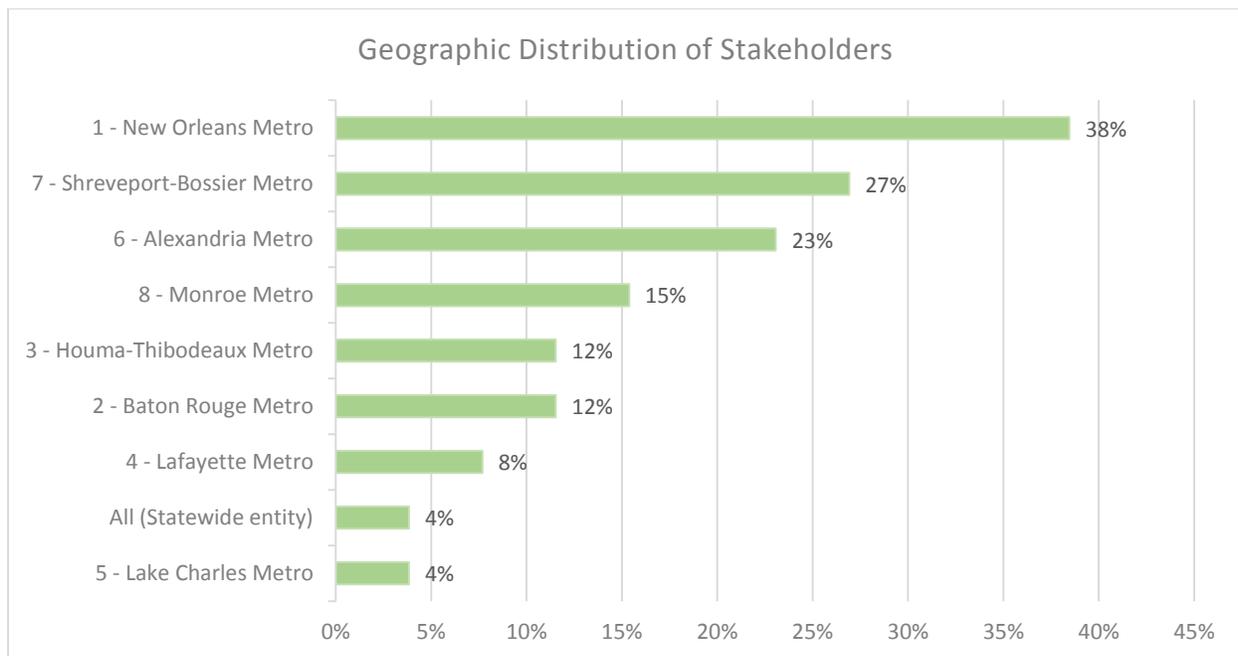


Figure 21: Geographic Distribution of Stakeholders

The majority of respondents represented local governmental entities (parks and recreation departments, public works departments, etc.), while over ¼ of respondents represented non-profit organizations (e.g. advocacy groups).

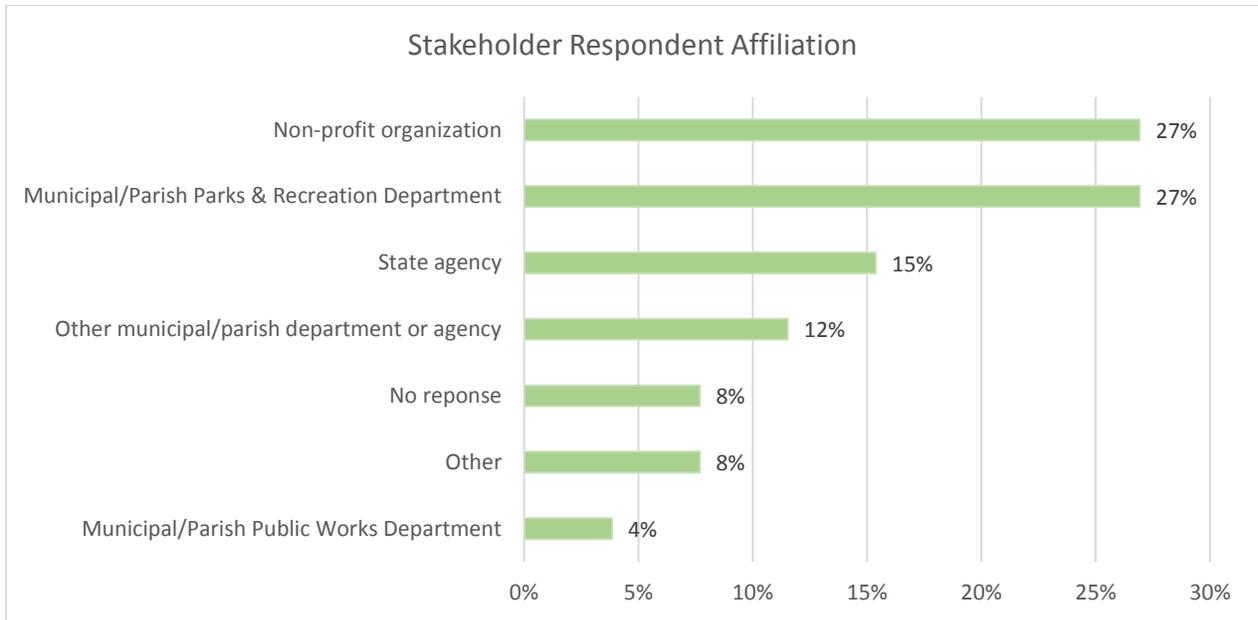


Figure 22: Stakeholder Respondent Affiliation

Respondents represent organizations that are or have been involved in all facets of trail planning, development, and operations, from trail planning and design, to construction, to operations, maintenance, and programming. In addition, one respondent represented a levee district for which recreational activity is a secondary purpose for levee access facilities.

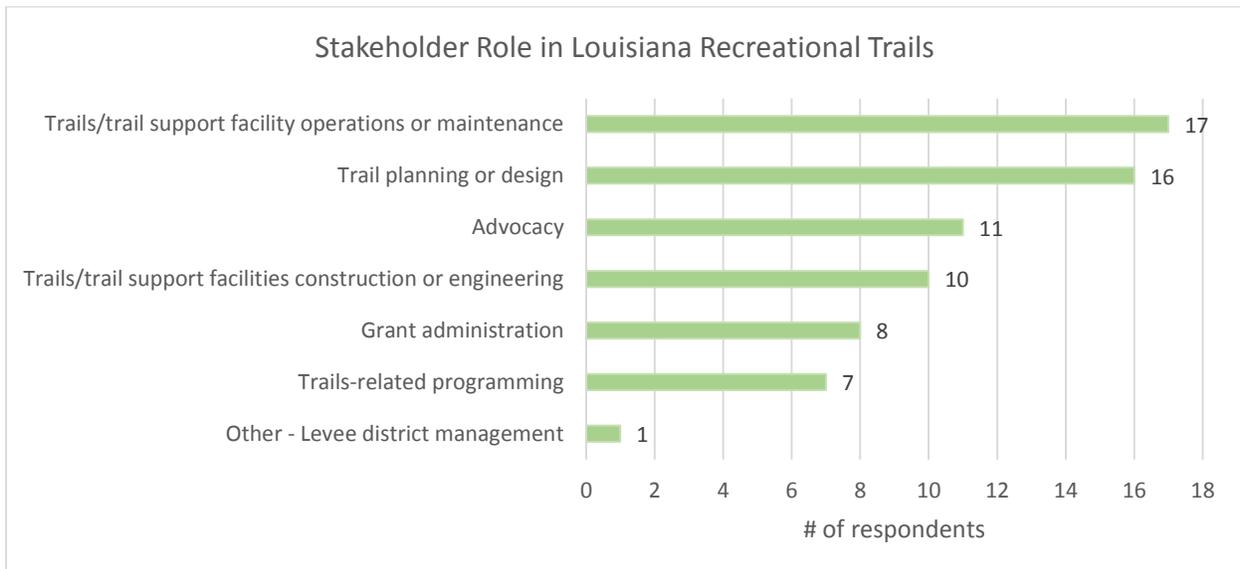


Figure 23: Stakeholder Role in Louisiana Recreational Trails

The majority of stakeholder organizations focus primarily on trails for non-motorized users (including a few involved in paddle trails), however, entities involved with motorized trails were represented by approximately 1/3 of respondents.

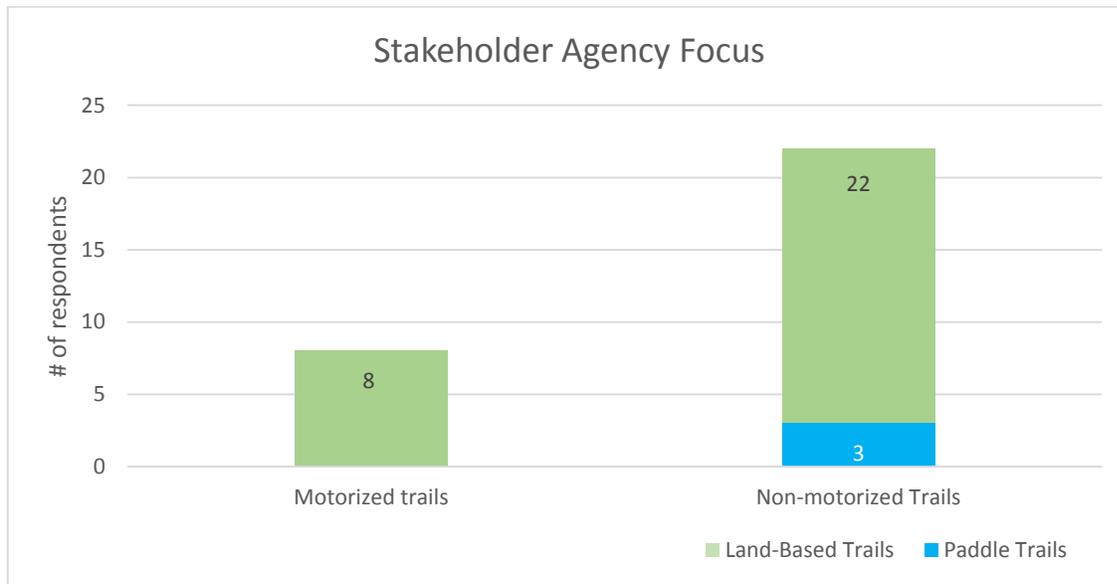


Figure 24: Stakeholder Organization Focus

The majority of stakeholder respondents (or the organizations they represent) have been directly involved in the implementation of one or more projects funded by the Louisiana RTP.

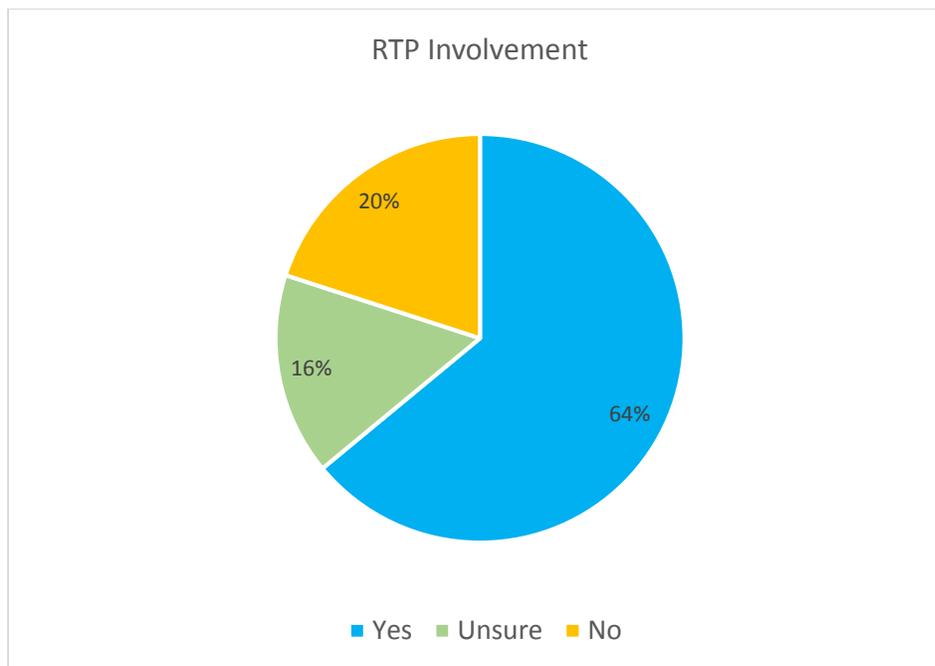


Figure 25: L RTP Involvement

Approximately half of respondents reported that their jurisdiction has a regional or local plan addressing trails and/or active transportation, though many respondents indicated uncertainty about the presence of such a document.

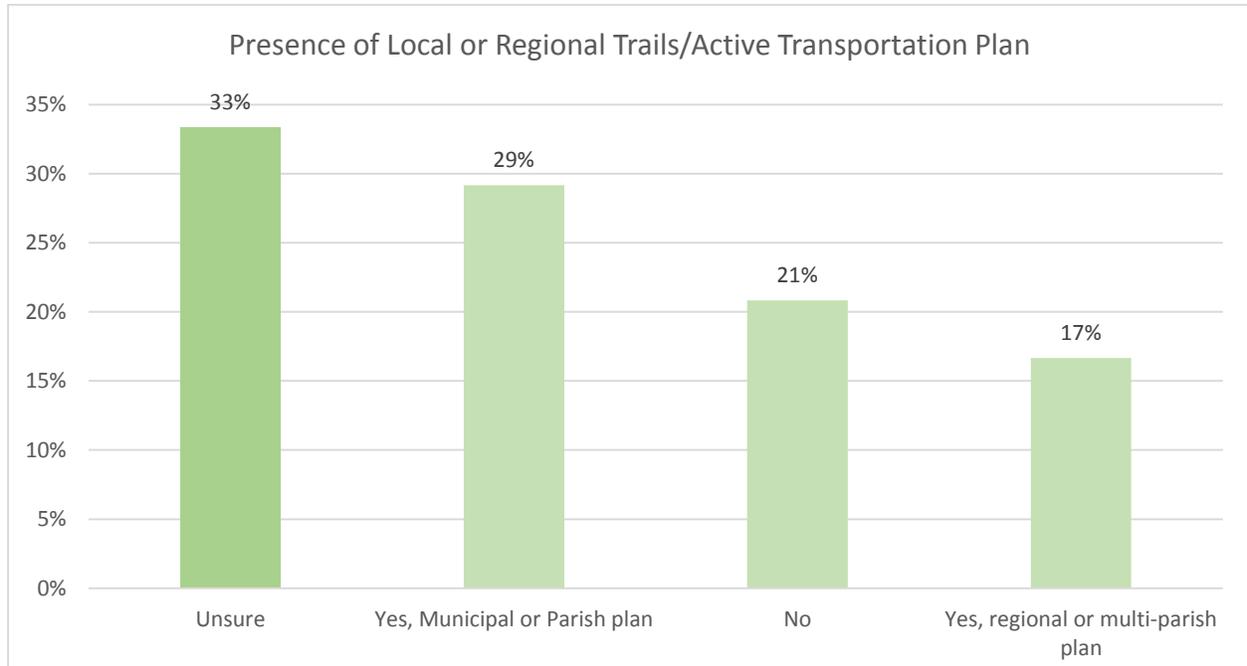


Figure 26: Presence of Local or Regional Trails/Active Transportation Plan

Trail Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to identify priorities, on a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 indicating a top priority and 1 indicating “not a priority at all” for trails within their planning region in several broad categories: trail construction and maintenance, trail and trailhead amenities, water trail and trailhead amenities, safety and security, and other.

Overall, the highest levels of priority (based on mean scores) were assigned to:

1. Crime/personal security on trails **(7.67)**
2. Protecting natural features/habitat **(7.62)**
3. Routine Trail Maintenance **(7.58)**
4. Enforcement of trail rules **(7.39)**
5. Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic) **(7.29)**
6. Trail info online (information about getting to the trail, etc.) **(7.29)**
7. Litter abatement/trash can availability **(7.26)**
8. More trails connecting communities and places **(7.25)**
9. Promoting trail-related tourism **(6.91)**
10. Promoting users’ ability to experience the natural environment **(6.81)**

Major trail repairs, trail surface quality, restroom facilities at trailheads, and security of parking areas also arose as top priorities for many respondents (based on median score responses).

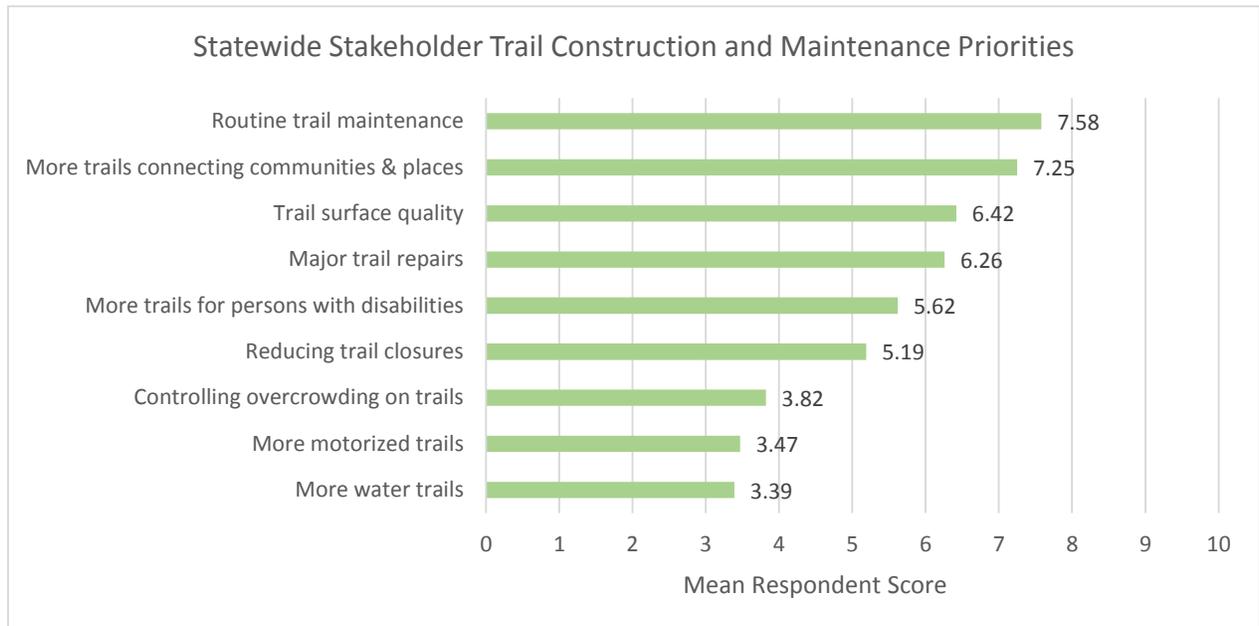


Figure 27: Statewide Stakeholder Trail Construction and Maintenance Priorities

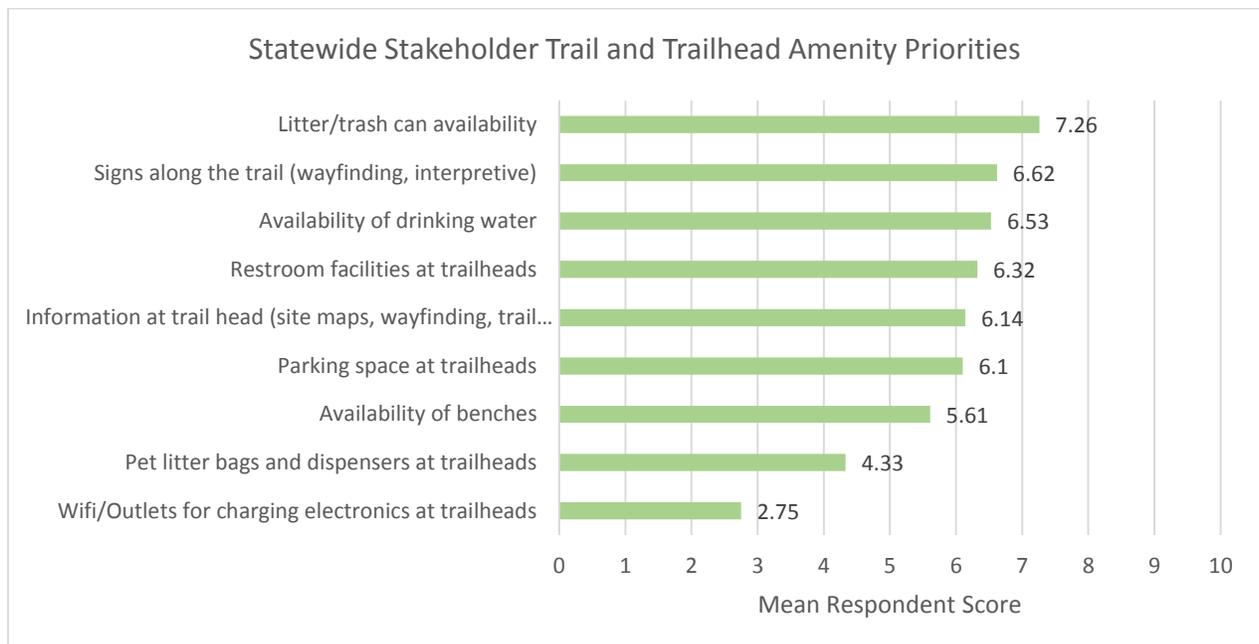


Figure 28: Statewide Stakeholder Trail and Trailhead Amenity Priorities

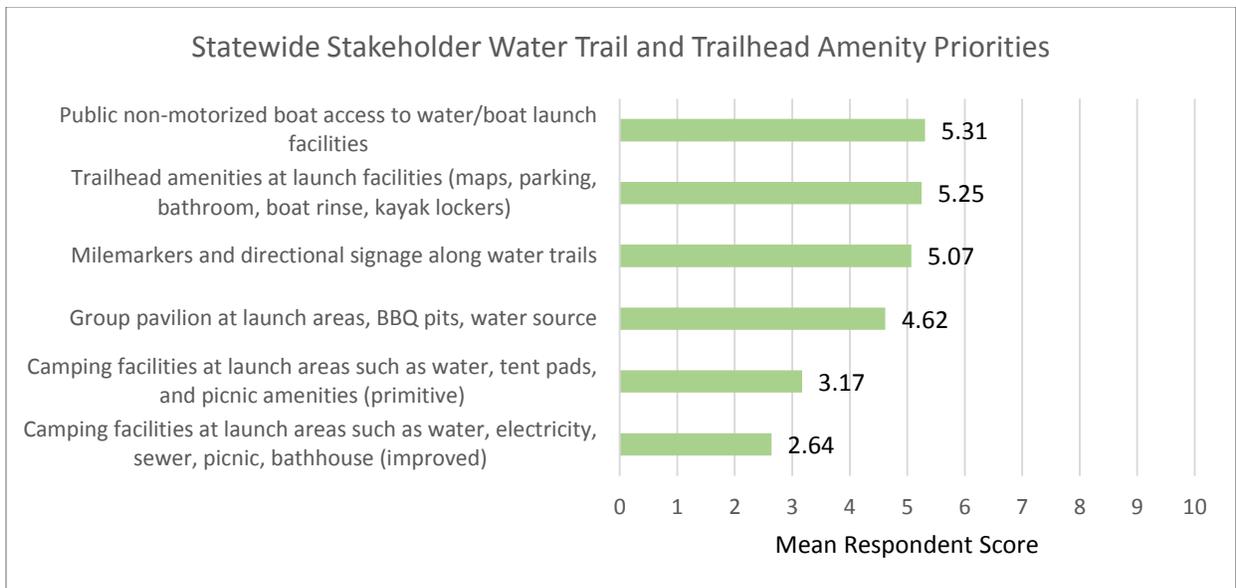


Figure 29: Statewide Stakeholder Water Trail and Trailhead Amenity Priorities

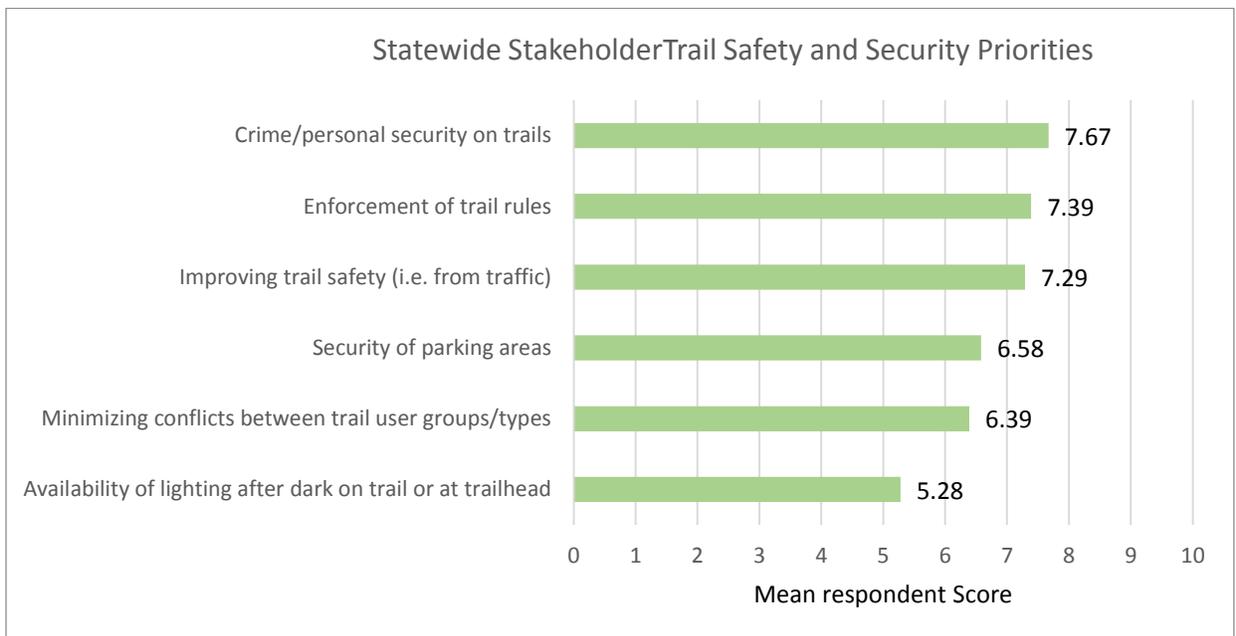


Figure 30: Statewide Stakeholder Safety and Security Priorities

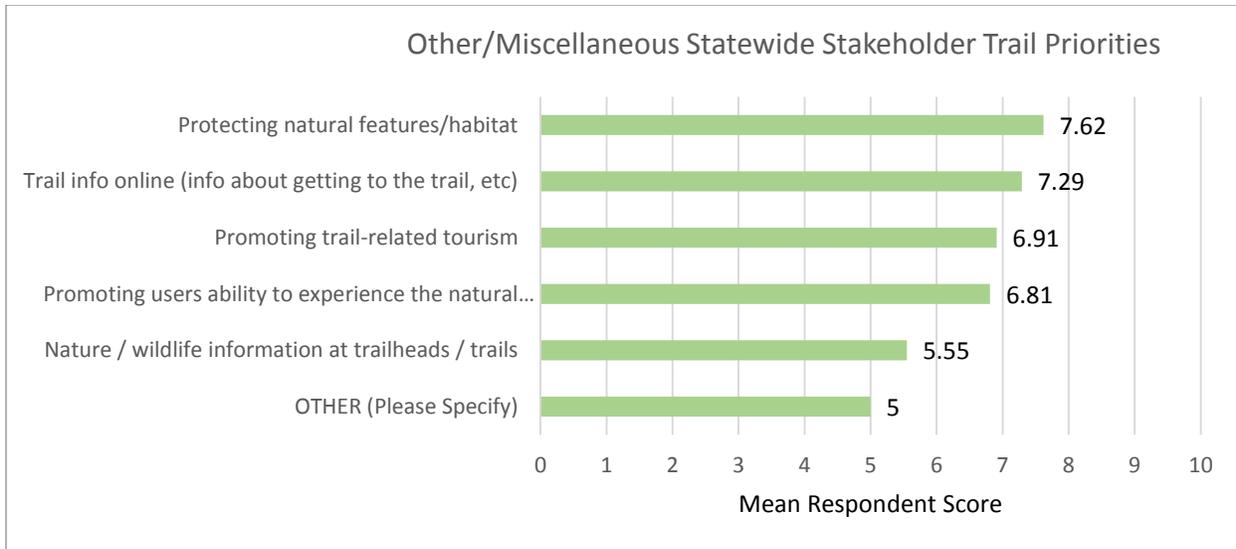


Figure 31: Other/Miscellaneous Statewide Stakeholder Trail Priorities

Priorities identified by stakeholder survey respondents in addition to those listed above (under “other”) include operation and maintenance of the Flood Protection System, and efforts to promote awareness and use of trails locally.

Different regions of the states (as well as different stakeholder groups) have differing assets, needs, and characteristics, which are reflected throughout the survey. Regional priorities vary, with the following top priorities identified (designated to mean any issue which received a mean score of 7.5 out of 10 or above) in each planning region:

Region 1:

1. Routine Trail Maintenance
2. Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
3. More trails connecting communities and places

Region 2:

1. Litter/trash can availability
2. Availability of drinking water
3. Restroom facilities at trailheads
4. Availability of lighting after dark on trail or at trailhead
5. Protecting natural features/habitat
6. Enforcement of trail rules
7. Parking space at trailheads
8. Availability of benches

Region 3:

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Routine Trail Maintenance
3. Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers)
4. Parking space at trailheads
5. Security of parking areas

Region 4:

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Routine Trail Maintenance
3. Reducing Trail Closures
4. Security of parking areas

Region 5:

11. Routine Trail Maintenance
12. Reducing Trail Closures
13. Security of parking areas
14. Enforcement of trail rules
15. Parking space at trailheads
16. Crime/personal security on trails
17. Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty etc.)
18. Promoting trail-related tourism
19. More trails for persons with disabilities
20. More motorized trails
21. Protecting natural features/habitat
22. Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
23. Major Trail Repairs
24. Restroom facilities at trailheads
25. Litter/trash can availability
26. More trails connecting communities and places
27. Promoting users' ability to experience the natural environment

Region 6:

1. Enforcement of trail rules
2. Protecting natural features/habitat
3. Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
4. Routine Trail Maintenance
5. Promoting trail-related tourism

Region 7:

1. Protecting natural features/habitat
2. Enforcement of trail rules
3. Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
4. Routine Trail Maintenance
5. Major Trail Repairs

Region 8:

6. Promoting trail-related tourism
7. Crime/personal security on trails
8. Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
9. More trails connecting communities and places
10. Security of parking areas
11. Routine Trail Maintenance

12. Litter/trash can availability
13. Enforcement of trail rules
14. Protecting natural features/habitat
15. More trails for persons with disabilities
16. Parking space at trailheads
17. Minimizing conflicts between trail user groups/types
18. Reducing Trail Closures
19. Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty etc.)

Notably, regions with a greater number of issues identified as high priorities does not necessarily reflect that these issues are not important in other region; rather this may largely reflect subjectivity inherent to the scaled ranking system (i.e., some respondents may perceive “top priorities” differently than others. Table 3 summarizes all trail priority scores by region. Darker cells indicate higher priority issues as identified by respondents.

Table 10: Regional Trail Priorities by Topic Area and Region (Stakeholder Survey)

| Regional Trail Priorities by Topic Area and Region (Stakeholder Survey) | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Trail Construction and Maintenance | | | | | | | | |
| Controlling overcrowding on trails | 3.8 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 2.5 | 4.3 |
| Routine Trail Maintenance | 8.1 | 7.3 | 7.5 | 8.7 | 10.0 | 7.6 | 8.6 | 8.8 |
| Major Trail Repairs | 6.9 | 6.8 | 3.0 | 4.7 | 8.5 | 7.1 | 7.6 | 6.8 |
| Reducing Trail Closures | 4.3 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 8.5 | 10.0 | 6.8 | 6.5 | 7.7 |
| Trail surface quality | 6.6 | 6.3 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 6.1 | 7.2 | 7.0 |
| More trails for persons with disabilities | 5.1 | 6.3 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 10.0 | 4.6 | 5.0 | 8.3 |
| More trails connecting communities and places | 7.5 | 6.3 | 4.3 | 3.5 | 8.0 | 5.8 | 7.0 | 9.0 |
| More Water Trails | 1.5 | 3.3 | 4.7 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 5.8 |
| More motorized trails | 2.7 | 3.3 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 10.0 | 5.5 | 4.3 | 6.0 |
| Trail and Trailhead Amenities | | | | | | | | |
| Availability of drinking water | 7.3 | 8.5 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 6.0 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 6.8 |
| Availability of benches | 5.3 | 8.0 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 6.5 |
| Restroom facilities at trailheads | 6.4 | 8.5 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 8.0 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 7.0 |
| Litter/trash can availability | 6.7 | 9.5 | 5.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 | 7.0 | 7.3 | 8.8 |
| Pet litter bags and dispensers at trailheads | 4.3 | 6.0 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 5.0 | 3.8 | 3.0 | 5.5 |
| Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty etc.) | 6.6 | 5.7 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.0 | 5.2 | 5.0 | 7.5 |
| Signs along the trail (wayfinding, interpretive) | 7.1 | 7.3 | 6.7 | 5.5 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 5.7 | 6.5 |
| Wifi/Outlets for charging electronics at trailheads | 3.0 | 4.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 2.5 |
| Parking space at trailheads | 5.4 | 8.0 | 7.3 | 6.7 | 10.0 | 6.7 | 6.8 | 8.2 |
| Water Trail and Trailhead Amenities | | | | | | | | |
| Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers) | 3.5 | 4.0 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 6.8 |
| Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, tent pads, and picnic amenities (primitive) | 2.3 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 4.0 |
| Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, electricity, sewer, picnic, bathhouse (improved) | 1.8 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 2.7 |
| Group pavilion at launch areas, BBQ pits, water source | 2.6 | 6.0 | 1.0 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 7.3 |
| Milemarkers and directional signage along water trails | 3.3 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 5.0 | 6.3 | 7.0 | 6.7 |
| Public non-motorized boat access to water/boat launch facilities | 3.2 | 5.5 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 6.5 | 7.3 |

| Safety and Security | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Minimizing conflicts between trail user groups/types | 6.7 | 6.8 | 6.3 | 4.0 | 7.0 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 7.8 |
| Security of parking areas | 5.0 | 7.3 | 7.0 | 7.5 | 10.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 9.0 |
| Crime/personal security on trails | 7.2 | 7.7 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.0 | 7.2 | 6.5 | 9.3 |
| Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic) | 7.7 | 6.8 | 5.0 | 4.7 | 7.0 | 6.2 | 6.7 | 7.0 |
| Enforcement of trail rules | 6.4 | 8.0 | 6.8 | 7.3 | 10.0 | 8.0 | 8.8 | 8.6 |
| Availability of lighting after dark on trail or at trailhead | 4.6 | 8.5 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 5.0 | 4.8 |
| Other | | | | | | | | |
| Promoting users ability to experience the natural environment | 6.8 | 6.0 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 7.5 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 7.4 |
| Nature / wildlife information at trailheads / trails | 5.1 | 6.3 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 7.0 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 7.0 |
| Protecting natural features/habitat | 7.1 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 7.8 | 9.3 | 8.4 |
| Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.) | 6.9 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 6.7 | 9.0 | 7.8 | 8.7 | 9.0 |
| Promoting trail-related tourism | 6.3 | 6.0 | 4.7 | 5.5 | 10.0 | 7.5 | 6.3 | 9.8 |
| OTHER (Please Specify) | 5.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Legend:

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| | Not a priority - 0 - 2.4 |
| | Low priority - 2.5 - 4.9 |
| | Medium priority - 5 - 7.4 |
| | High priority - 7.5 - 10 |

Among respondents who indicated an involvement or familiarity with motorized trails, trail maintenance was identified as the top funding need over the next ten years, followed by minimizing natural resource damage, and enforcing trail rules and regulations.

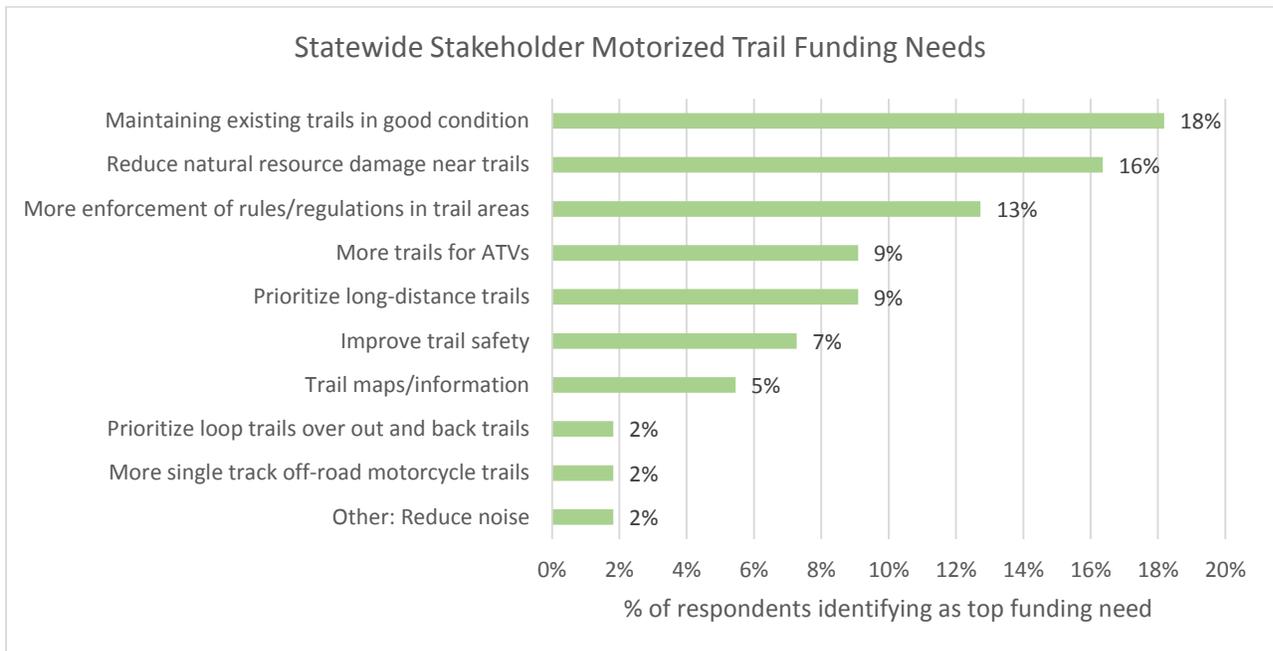


Figure 32: Statewide Stakeholder Motorized Trail Funding Needs

Evaluated by region, maintenance of existing trails and reduction of natural resource damage were identified by respondents in most regions as among the top three priorities, while improved trail information/maps, long distance trails, trail safety, more trails for ATVs, and increased enforcement were identified as top priorities in at least one region.

Table 11: Top Three Motorized (OHV) Stakeholder Trail Priorities by Region

| Top Three Motorized (OHV) Stakeholder Trail Priorities by Region | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Maintaining existing trails in good condition | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Reduce natural resource damage near trails | x | x | x | x | | x | | x |
| Trail maps/information | | | | x | | | | x |
| Prioritize long-distance trails | | | | | | x | | x |
| More trails for ATVs | x | x | | | | | | |
| Improve trail safety | | x | | | | | | |
| More enforcement of rules/regulations in trail areas | | | | | | x | | |
| Prioritize loop trails over out and back trails | | | | | | | | |
| More single track off-road motorcycle trails | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicate a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

For non-motorized trails (excluding water trails), trail maintenance was again identified as a top funding need for the next decade, followed by connecting trails into local walking and bicycling networks and larger trail networks.

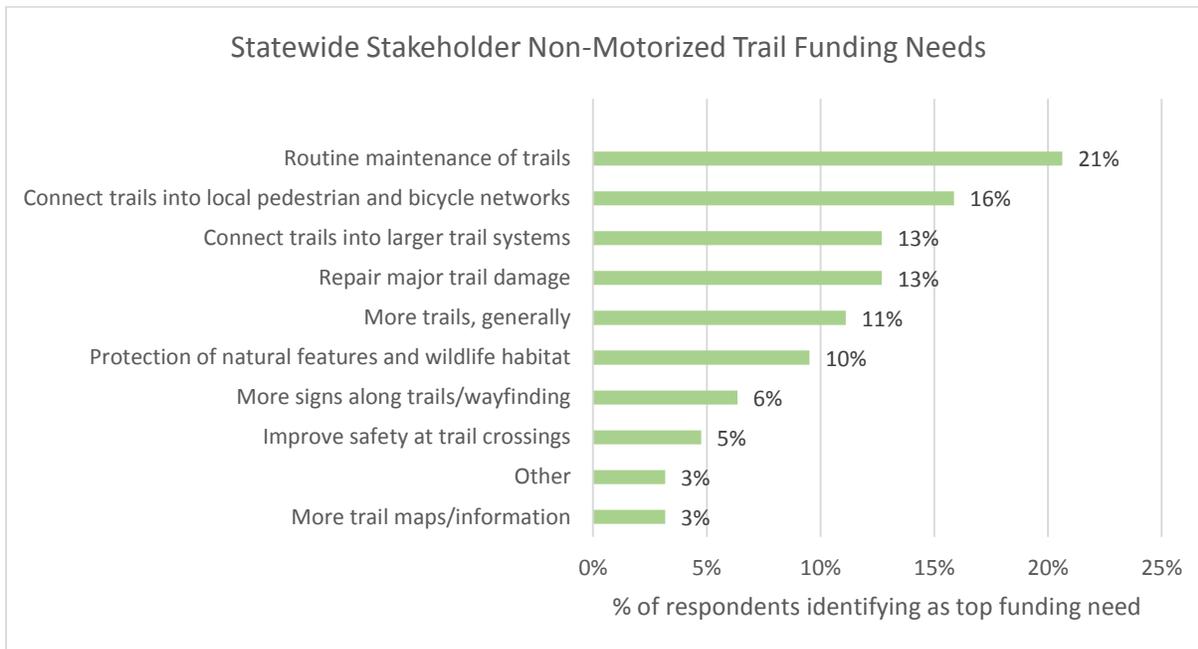


Figure 33: Statewide Stakeholder Non-Motorized Trail Funding Needs

Regionally, routine trail maintenance and protection of natural features and wildlife habitat were identified as top priorities in most regions, while major repairs, more trails, more maps and information, and improved connectivity into pedestrian and bicycle networks were identified as priorities in one or more regions.

Table 12: Top Three Non-Motorized Stakeholder Trail Priorities by Region

| Top Three Non-Motorized Stakeholder Trail Priorities by Region | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Routine maintenance of trails | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Protection of natural features and wildlife habitat | | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Repair major trail damage | x | | | | | x | x | |
| Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks | x | | | | | | | |
| More trails, generally | | | | | | | | x |
| More trail maps/information | | | | | | | x | |
| Improve safety at trail crossings | | | | | | | | |
| Connect trails into larger trail systems | | | | | | | | |
| More signs along trails/wayfinding | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | x | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicate a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

Finally, for water/paddle trails, respondents indicated that access to water, generally, is the most pressing funding need, followed by provision of parking and launch facilities and designation of waterways for non-motorized users only.

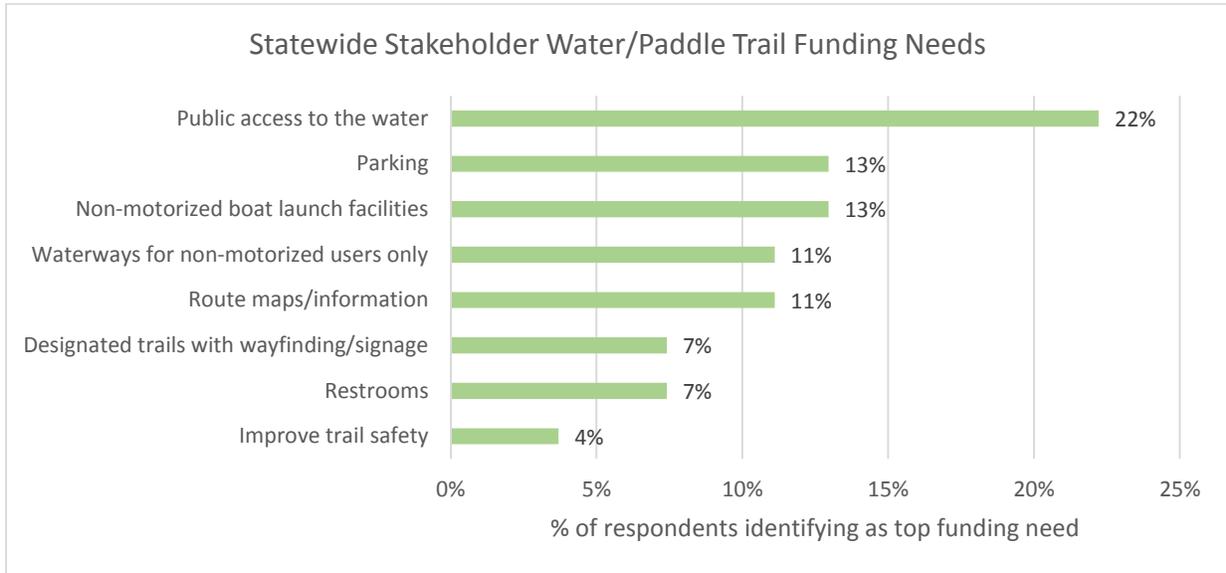


Figure 34: Statewide Stakeholder Water/Paddle Trail Funding Needs

Respondents in most regions of the state identified improved public access to waterways, generally, as a top priority, while parking, route maps and information, boat launch facilities, improved trail markings, and restricting access for motorized waterway users were identified as critical in portions of the state.

Table 13: Top Three Water Trail Stakeholder Priorities by Region

| Top Three Water Trail Stakeholder Priorities by Region | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Public access to the water | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x |
| Route maps/information | | | | x | | x | x | |
| Parking | x | | x | x | | | | |
| Non-motorized boat launch facilities | | | | | | x | | x |
| Designated trails with wayfinding/signage | | | | | | x | x | |
| Waterways for non-motorized users only | | | x | | | | | |
| Restrooms | | | | | | | | |
| Improve trail safety | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicate a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

With respect to creation of additional opportunities to meet existing or anticipated demand via new trail investments over the next ten years, respondents overall indicated that walking/hiking, bicycling (hard-surface), and running are top priorities for their planning region.

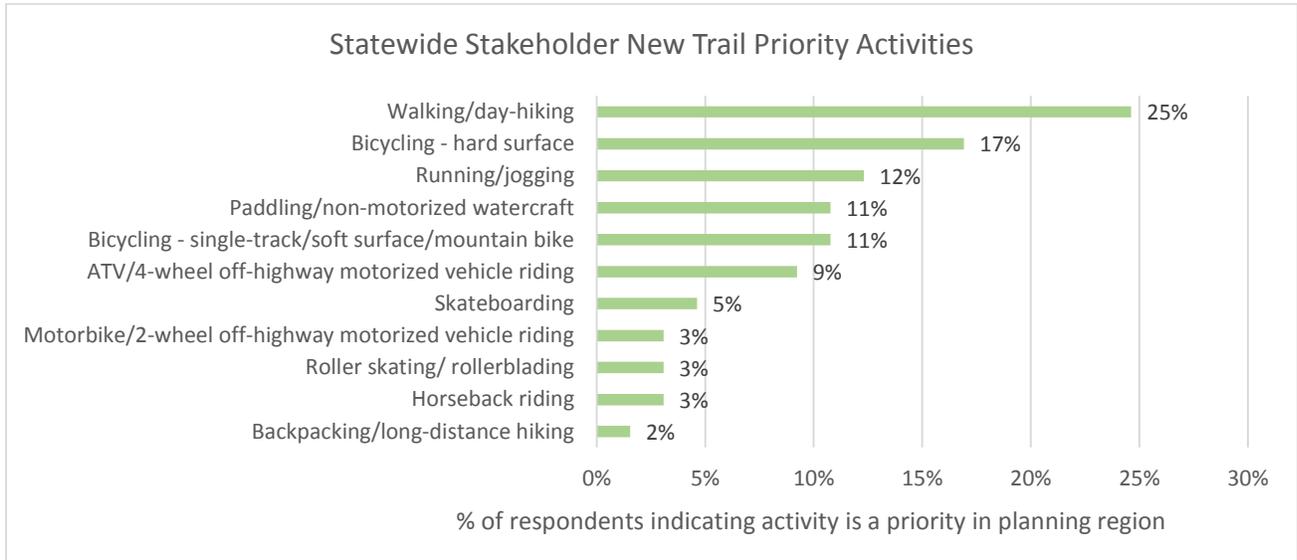


Figure 35: Statewide Stakeholder New Trail Priority Activities

Again, these priorities vary somewhat by region, with walking/day-hiking identified as a top priority in most of the state, hard-surface bicycling identified as a priority in Southeast Louisiana but mountain bicycling a greater priority elsewhere, and water trail activities prioritized in regions 2, 3, and 4. Motorized trail activities were identified as top priorities in regions 5, 6, and 7.

Table 14: Top Three Stakeholder Priority Trail Activities by Region

| Top Three Stakeholder Priority Trail Activities by Region | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Walking/day-hiking | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x |
| Bicycling - single-track/soft surface/mountain bike | | | x | | x | x | x | |
| Bicycling - hard surface | x | x | x | | | | | |
| Paddling/non-motorized watercraft | | x | x | x | | | | |
| Running/jogging | x | | | | | | | x |
| ATV/4-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding | | | | | | x | x | |
| Motorbike/2-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding | | | | | x | | | |
| Backpacking/long-distance hiking | | | | | | | | |
| Horseback riding | | | | | | | | |
| Roller skating/rollerblading | | | | | | | | |
| Skateboarding | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicate a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

L RTP Implementation

Respondents generally indicated that the Recreational Trails Program has served their agency and/or region's needs extremely well or very well over the last ten years, with fewer than 10% of respondents indicating dissatisfaction.

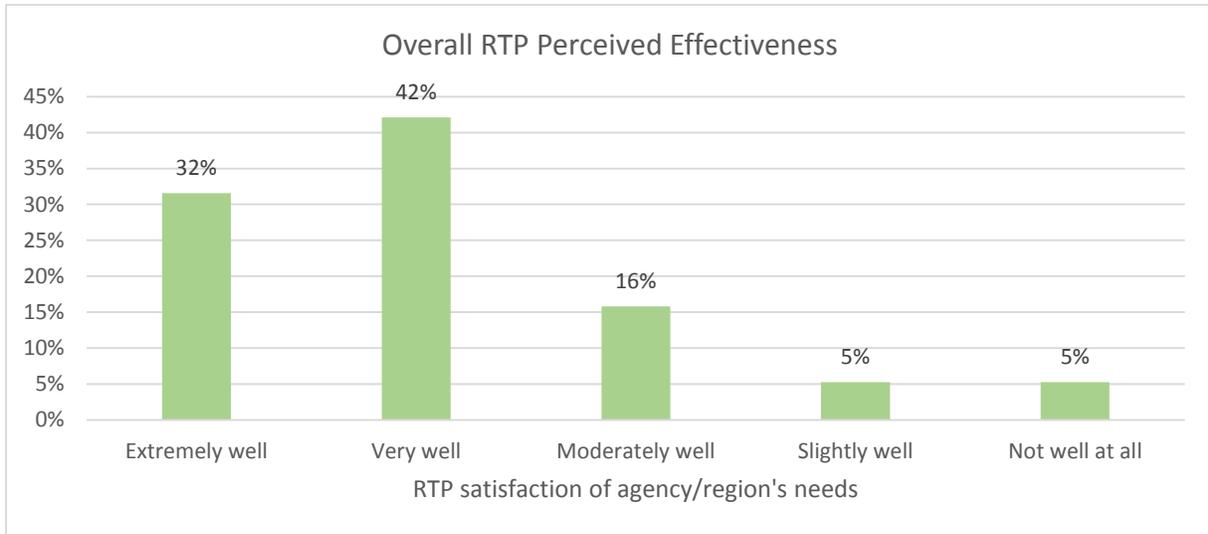


Figure 36: Overall L RTP Perceived Effectiveness

Key successes of the L RTP identified by respondents related to trail planning, development, and operations include the following:

- Completion and/or phased expansions of major trail projects (e.g. Louisiana Trail, Mississippi River Trail, Lafitte Greenway)
- Adding trail facilities on bridges
- Improving and expanding motorized trails in Wildlife Management Areas for management as well as recreation
- Developing successful partnerships between state agencies, local governments, and local community partners: "The State of Louisiana has been one of our best advocates and continues to be a strong voice for our needs."
- A perception of improved community health and safety as a result of trail investment
- Rapid project delivery relative to other State funding programs
- Using L RTP funds to leverage other funding sources
- Increasing community and local support and collaboration for trail projects
- Trail improvements that reduce long-term maintenance costs

In addition, several respondents specifically indicated that L RTP staff had been effective in supporting application development for communities and projects of all sizes, and the majority of respondents indicated satisfaction with the application process overall.

Conversely, challenges or barriers related to trail planning, development, and operations include:

- Difficulties supporting trail maintenance
- Difficulties identifying and/or securing land suitable for trails
- Community opposition to local trails

- Identifying qualified contractors for construction
- Lack of local capacity/resources to develop trail plans and prepare LRTP applications
- US Army Corps of Engineers permitting processes and regulations
- Lack of operational resources, e.g. trail rangers
- Difficulties working with involved agencies (e.g. delays in project delivery when working with National Forest Service)
- Lack of local matching funds
- Lack of political leadership prioritizing trails
- Adapting and upgrading ATV trails to facilitate use of UTVs
- Lack of data about trail usage (counts, surveys, etc.)
- Difficulties maintaining insurance on facility
- Trail access at waterway crossings (i.e. bridges)
- Lack of overall vision for trails

In addition, respondents indicate a need to publicize both existing and potential trails to new audiences, such as expanding awareness and use of National Wildlife Refuge trails for non-hunting purposes

Some jurisdictions are keenly interested in incorporating long-distance trails into levee systems, in partnership with the Levee Conservation District, although some survey respondents also indicate a need to ensure that roles and rights-of-way are clearly communicated for multi-functional facilities, for which recreation may technically be a secondary use to the primary purpose of providing access to authorities responsible for asset management, etc.

Broadly, increasing trail access is a priority concern, whether through construction of new trails, expansion of existing trails to facilitate greater access, or in the case of some trails, expanding hours of operation for users (e.g. Audubon Wilderness Park, which is only accessible on weekdays) or expanding from seasonal access to year-round access.

Among respondents who have been directly involved in LRTP applications, typical project delivery times from grant award to completion were reported anywhere from 6 months to 5 years, with 2-3 years most typical. An equal number of respondents indicated that LRTP project delivery time has stayed the same over the last five years or decreased as indicated that delivery times have increased (though most respondents were unsure and/or have not been involved with LRTP projects for longer than 5 years). Delays, where reported, were cited as linked to state procurement guidelines, internal local government issues (permitting and/or lack of capacity), speed of the environmental review process, and weather/flooding issues which have delayed construction on some projects. Some respondents cited a need for state assistance on design and engineering of projects, as DOTD offers for Local Road Safety Program projects.

Maintenance

Maintenance is identified as a key concern for many stakeholders. Some trail facilities are maintained solely through volunteer support, while others (e.g. trails associated with WMAs/LDWF) are maintained by dedicated staff.

Annual brush clearing/downed tree removal and trail re-marking are indicated as key needs for certain types of trails, while flooding is cited as a critical non-routine maintenance issue in some areas.

Financial support for maintenance comes from:

- Trail owners (i.e. local governments)
- LDWF conservation funds
- Wildlife Restoration Funds
- Pittman Robertson (federal aid) cost share
- Recreation district millages
- Foundation/non-profit support (e.g. Tammany Trace Foundation, Friends of Lafitte Greenway)

Some respondents indicated a need to allocate a greater share of LRTP funds to maintenance and improvement of existing trails, such as through awarding more points to improvement projects in the LRTP project selection process.

Safety

Specific needs identified pertaining to improving or maintaining safety for trail users included the following recommendations:

- Provide Emergency Services providers (e.g. 911 call centers) with lists/maps of trails to support emergency response
- Trail intersections with motor vehicle traffic are a common concern. Where trails enter urbanized areas, there is a need to reduce conflicts with private driveways and reduce encroachment of parked vehicles on trail. Crosswalks connecting trails through urbanized areas is a concern, particularly during peak and/or school hours. Both road and trail user behaviors (e.g. failure to yield or stop as indicated by signage) are a concern for many respondents, and serious crash incidents have occurred.
- Maintenance issues are also identified as a safety hazard, e.g. resurfacing or grading of trails and sidewalk facilities, marking of crossings, and signage/wayfinding.
- Crime is identified as a secondary safety concern in some communities

Data and Evaluation

Most local jurisdictions do not track or count trail usage in their jurisdictions. A few notable exceptions include:

- A continuous, automated counter on the Tammany Trace in Mandeville (presently inoperable)
- Infrared sensors on the Woodlands Trail (8,000 - 10,000 visitors per year)
- Overall annual use of each Wildlife Management Area (but not data pertaining to specific trails), documented through membership and daily visitor logs
- Continuous, automated infrared counts on the Lafitte Greenway

In addition to usage data, a few respondents report having conducted or being aware of community and/or intercept surveys (e.g. Lafitte Greenway) but most indicate little or no post-construction trail facility evaluation activities other than post-project inspection/assessment reports required by the LRTP grant and informal monitoring by relevant personnel to identify issues. One stakeholder identified a need to better understand the public's priorities and needs with respect to trails as a key recommendation for maximizing outcomes of the LRTP.

Outside Funding Sources

Stakeholders identified the following additional funding sources for trail development or operation, outside of the LRTP:

- Local general funds
- Philanthropic/foundation grants (e.g. Walmart)
- LDWF funds (conservation funds, Pittman Robertson funds)
- FHWA Transportation Alternatives Program
- STP funding (MPOs)
- Local capital improvement program
- Recreation district millages
- Individual donations and/or membership fees
- Community Development Block Grants
- Earned income for program fees and events

Future Trails

Respondents indicated the following as notable planned or priority future trails, not currently funded through the LRTP:

- Levee trails in St. Mary Parish
- Connection between Civic Center/Library and Bayou Country Sports Park via Southdown Mandalay Road and S. Hollywood Road (Houma)
- Additional connections from the Tammany Trace
- Braithwaite Park ATV Trails, Plaquemines Parish
- Providence Park trail via Lake Street and Providence Street, Lake Providence
- Breezy Hill Single Track Trail Project, Bentley, LA
- Federal City to Cutoff bike trail connection
- The Louisiana Bootlace Trail Network

C. Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Trail User Survey

Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Trail User Survey Text

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey about Louisiana's trails!

The purpose of this survey, conducted by the University of New Orleans Transportation Institute on behalf of the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program (RTP) (a grant program administered by the State of Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Office of State Parks) is to better understand how Louisiana residents use trail facilities throughout the state, and what trail users would like to see prioritized over the next ten years.

Findings from this research will be synthesized into a draft Strategic Plan for the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program for the next ten years, to guide the program in providing innovative solutions for issues facing motorized and non-motorized trail users and supporting trail projects, with an emphasis on public health and active transportation.

This survey is intended for anyone who has utilized a trail in Louisiana in the last 12 months, including trails and paths for walking, bicycling, ATV or motorbike use, etc., as well as designated "water trails" for non-motorized boating and paddle sports.

In which parish do you live? *(Drop down list of all parishes)*

Generally, how often do you use trail facilities of any kind, for any purpose?

- Daily
- 4-6 times a week
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- Every 2-3 months
- A few times a year
- At least once a year
- Less than once a year

In the last 12 months, approximately how many days did you use a trail facility anywhere in Louisiana? *(open answer, numerical)*

What kind of activities do you participate in on Louisiana trails? *(select all that apply)*

- Walking/Day Hiking
- Running/Jogging
- Backpacking/Long-Distance Hiking
- Bicycling - single track/soft surface/mountain bike
- Bicycling - hard surface
- Horseback Riding
- Roller Skating/Rollerblading

- Skateboarding
- ATV/4-Wheel Off-Highway Riding
- Motorbike/2-wheel Off-Highway Riding
- Paddling/Non-Motorized Watercraft
- Accessing Fishing or Hunting by land or water trail/launch
- Other (specify)

What would you consider your main purpose for using trails?

- Recreation
- Health and Fitness
- Commuting to Work
- Transportation (other than to work)
- Training
- Other (Specify)

When you visit a trail, what is the average number of hours you spend on the trail per visit? (*Open answer, numerical*)

Do you visit trails that are in your own community, or travel to trails outside your immediate area?

- Trails in my own community
- Travel to other destinations to use trails
- Both

Which of the following best describes your general type of trail use?

- I generally use trails close to home for routine/everyday activities such as exercise, dog-walking, or transportation
- I generally use trails for planned excursions or day trips
- I generally use trails for multi-day trips
- All of the above
- Other (specify)

Display Logic: If X Parish is Selected (Parishes grouped by region)

Please select from this (partial) list of trails in your region any trails which you are familiar with and use regularly: (*Display list of all RTP trails within Planning Region X*)

Are there any trails that you use regularly (elsewhere in the state, or any that you may know by another name than those listed above)? If so, please list them here

Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with Louisiana trails for your favorite trail-related activity across each of the dimensions below?

| | Extremely Satisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Extremely dissatisfied |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| PROXIMITY - you can access trails for this activity near your home | | | | | |
| QUALITY - trails are well-suited to the experience you seek | | | | | |
| VARIETY - you can access multiple trails | | | | | |

Have opportunities to engage in your favorite trail activity or activities increased, decreased, or not changed over the last ten years?

- Increased greatly
- Increased somewhat
- No change
- Decreased somewhat
- Decreased greatly

What is your preferred trail surface for your favorite trail activity? (select all that apply)

- Dirt
- Grass
- Woodchip
- Wood/plastic/rubber
- Gravel/rock
- Asphalt/concrete
- Water
- Other (Specify)

Based on your experience using Recreational Trails in Louisiana, please share your priorities for trails in your planning region over the next 10 years, keeping in mind limited funding and land.

For each action, slide the bar to indicate how high a priority that action is for you and your family or community (1 = not a priority at all, 10 = top priority)

1. Trail construction and maintenance

- Controlling overcrowding on trails
- Routine trail maintenance
- Major trail repairs
- Reducing trail closures
- Trail surface quality
- More trails for persons with disabilities
- More trails connecting communities and places
- More water trails
- More motorized trails

2. Trail and Trailhead Amenities

- Availability of drinking water
- Availability of benches
- Restroom facilities at trailheads
- Litter/trash can availability
- Pet litter bags and dispensers at trailheads
- Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty, etc.)
- Signs along the trail (wayfinding, interpretive)
- Wifi/Outlets for charging electronics at trailheads
- Parking space at trailheads

3. Water Trail and Trailhead Amenities

- Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers)
- Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, tent pads, and picnic amenities (primitive)
- Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, electricity, sewer, picnic, bathhouse (improved)
- Group pavilion at launch areas, BBQ pits, water source
- Milemarkers and directional signage along water trails
- Public non-motorized boat access to water/boat launch facilities

4. Safety and Security

- Minimizing conflicts between trail user groups/types
- Security of parking areas
- Crime/personal security on trails
- Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
- Enforcement of trail rules
- Availability of lighting after dark on trail or at trailhead

5. Other

- Promoting users ability to experience the natural environment
- Nature / wildlife information at trailheads / trails
- Protecting natural features/habitat
- Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc.)
- Promoting trail-related tourism
- OTHER (Please Specify)

Display logic: Display only if relevant trail activities are selected

For motorized (OHV) trails specifically, which of the following do you anticipate being the top three funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- More single track off-road motorcycle trails
- Maintaining existing trails in good condition
- Reduce natural resource damage near trails
- Prioritize loop trails over out and back trails
- Trail maps/information
- More trails for ATVs
- More enforcement of rules/regulations in trail areas
- Prioritize long-distance trails
- Improve trail safety
- Other (please specify)
- Not applicable/Don't know

Display logic: Display only if relevant trail activities are selected

For non-motorized trails specifically (excluding water trails), which of the following do you anticipate being the top three funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- Connect trails into larger trail systems
- Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks
- Routine maintenance of trails
- More signs along trails/wayfinding
- Protection of natural features and wildlife habitat
- Repair major trail damage
- More trails, generally
- More trail maps/information
- Improve safety at trail crossings
- Other (please specify)
- Not applicable/Don't know

Display logic: Display only if relevant trail activities are selected

For water/paddle trails specifically, which of the following do you anticipate being the top three funding needs in your region over the next 10 years? (select three)

- Public access to the water
- Non-motorized boat launch facilities
- Restrooms
- Route maps/information
- Parking
- Designated trails with wayfinding/signage
- Waterways for non-motorized users only

- Improve trail safety
- Other
- Not applicable/Don't know

Which activities would you prioritize with respect to creation of new trail opportunities in your planning region in the next 10 years? These would be additional opportunities to meet existing or anticipated demand that do not detract from current opportunities. This includes trails for recreation, commuting, and other purposes. (Select all that apply)

- Walking/day-hiking
- Running/jogging
- Backpacking/long-distance hiking
- Bicycling - single-track/soft surface/mountain bike
- Bicycling - hard surface
- Horseback riding
- Roller skating/rollerblading
- Skateboarding
- ATV/4-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding
- Motorbike/2-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding
- Paddling/non-motorized watercraft
- Other

Please describe any other priority issues, concerns, ideas, or needs pertaining to trails in your community, region, or statewide

The following questions are for classification purposes only.

Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other (Specify)
- Prefer not to state

Age

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to state

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to state

How would you describe your race or ethnicity?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other
- Prefer not to state

Public/Trail User Survey Findings

Over 1200 individuals initiated responses to the survey, with 956 responses substantively completed (the remainder are excluded from this summary analysis). These respondents come from at least 51 parishes (notably, about ¼ of survey participants neglected to identify their parish), and all regions of the state.

Table 15: Trail User Survey Respondent Geographic Distribution

| Trail User Survey Respondent Geographic Distribution | | | |
|--|--------|------------|------------|
| Name | Region | % | Count |
| Baton Rouge Region (2) | 2 | 34.9% | 266 |
| New Orleans Region (1) | 1 | 22.0% | 168 |
| Lafayette Region (4) | 4 | 14.4% | 110 |
| Shreveport Region (7) | 7 | 10.4% | 79 |
| Monroe Region (8) | 8 | 6.3% | 48 |
| South Central Region (3) | 3 | 5.1% | 39 |
| Lake Charles Region (5) | 5 | 3.5% | 27 |
| Alexandria Region (6) | 6 | 3.3% | 25 |
| No Response | n/a | 25.5% | 194 |
| TOTAL | | 100 | 956 |

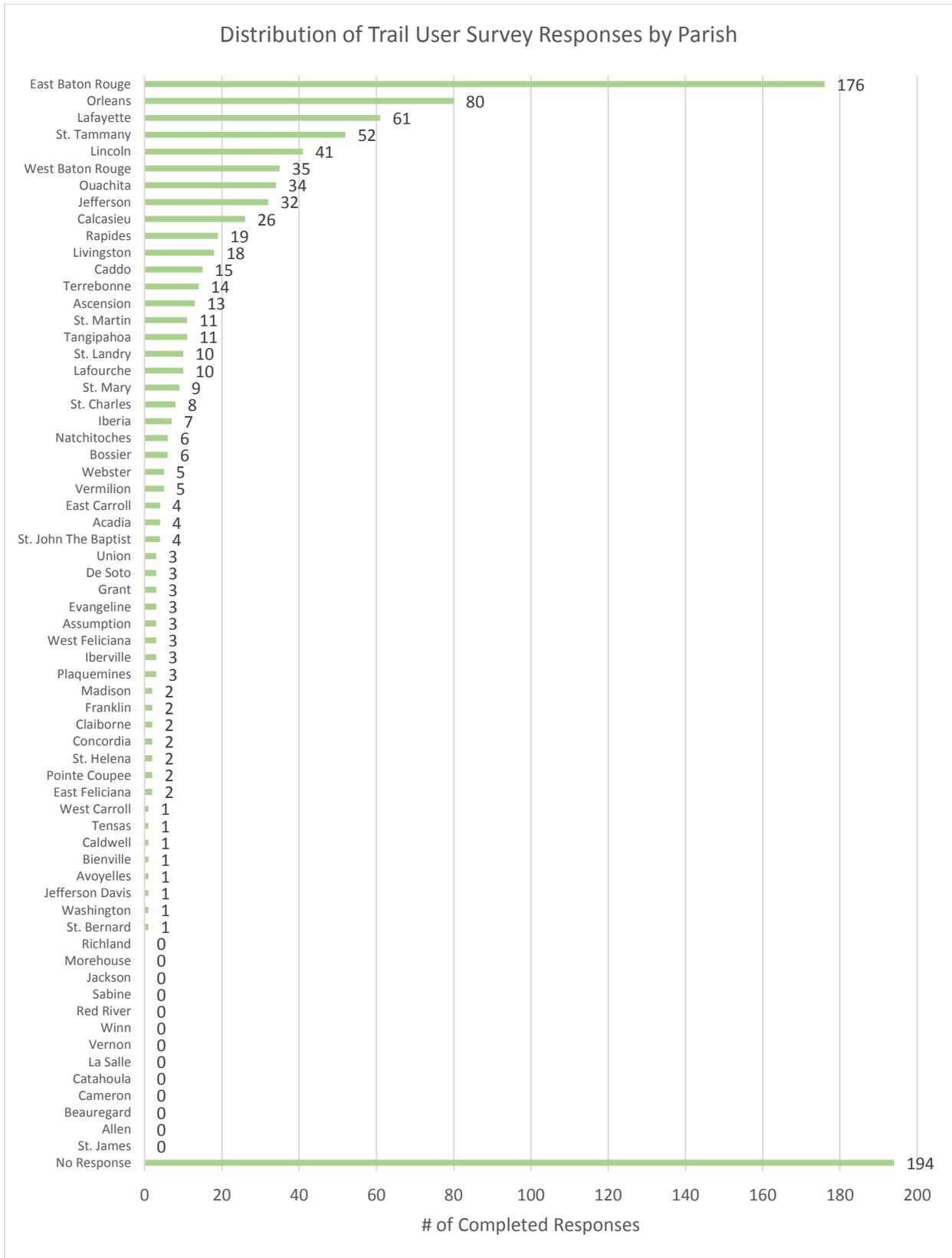


Figure 37: Distribution of Trail User Survey Responses by Parish

Trail Use

Among these respondents, about half indicated that they are frequent trail users (at least weekly), with respondents reporting trail use anywhere from zero to 365 days in the last 12 months. On average, respondents indicated an average (mean) number of trail use days of 57 in the last year, with a median response of 25.

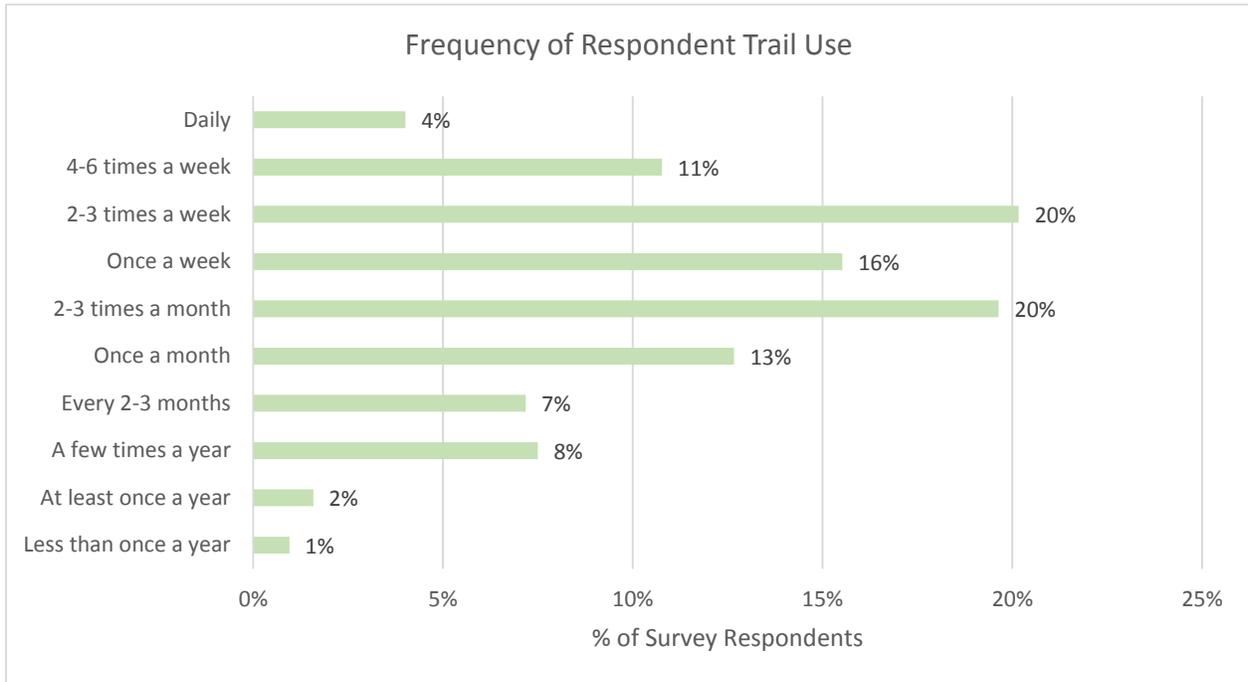


Figure 38: Frequency of Respondent Trail Use

Walking/day-hiking, bicycling, and running/jogging were the most popular activities reported by survey respondents (when asked to indicate all activities for which they utilize Louisiana trails), followed by paddle/watercraft activities and motorbike usage. “Other” activities reported by Louisiana trail users that the respondents considered outside the range of listed options included:

- Bird/wildlife watching (x 25)
- Photography (x6)
- Foraging/Botany (x3)
- Scouting (x3)
- Disc Golf (x2)
- Herpetology (x2)
- Work/Research (x2)
- Painting and sketching
- Camping
- Geocaching
- Tubing

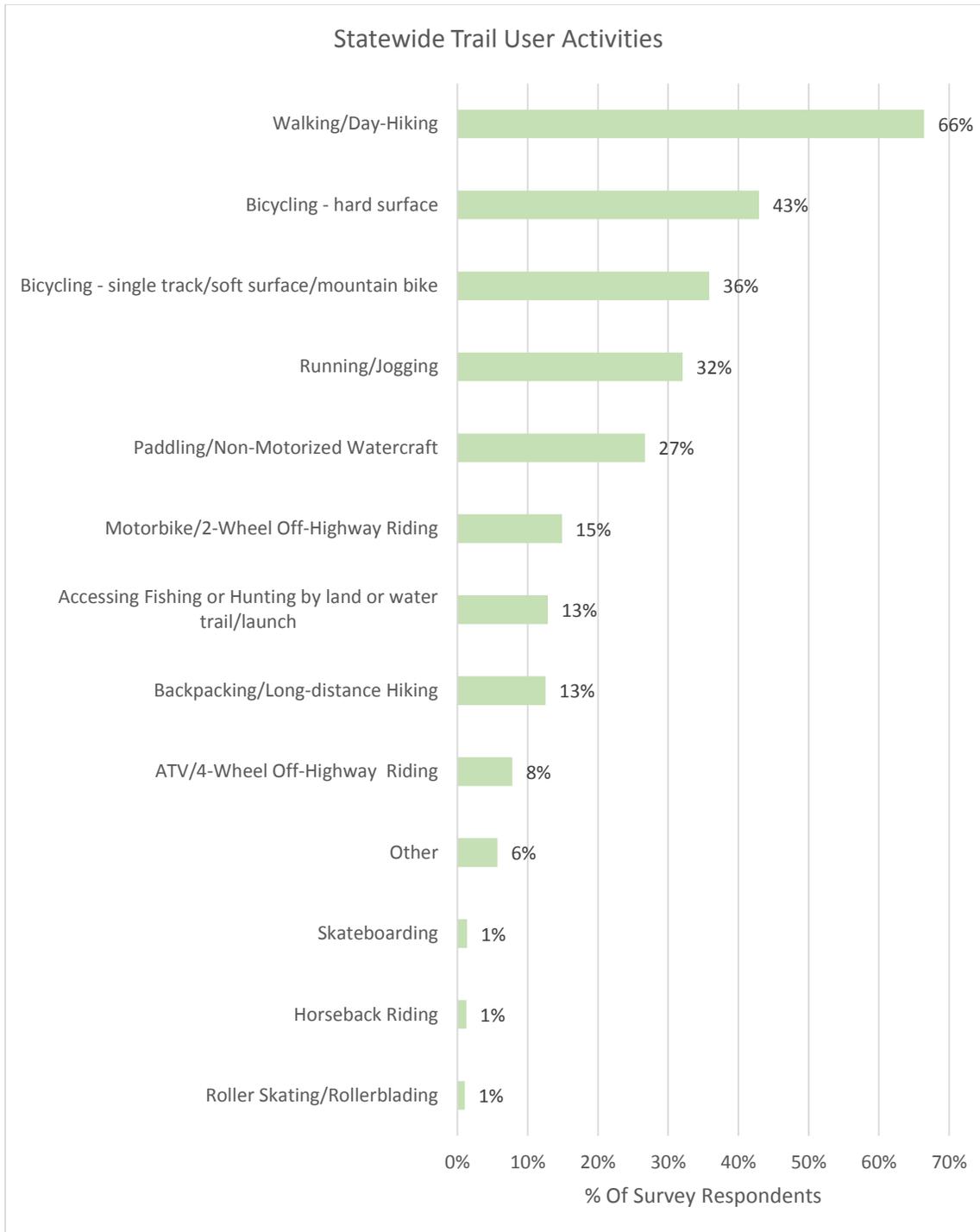


Figure 39: Statewide Trail User Activities

Trail activities also vary by region, with greater interest in hard-surface bicycling in the more urbanized regions of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, in particular (and conversely, a greater apparent interest in mountain bicycling in Northern Louisiana), and significantly greater use of motorized trails in the central, south central, and northern regions of the state (Table 9).

Table 16: Trail Activities by Region

| Trail Activities by Region | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Activity | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Walking/Day-Hiking | 70% | 71% | 38% | 66% | 67% | 71% | 70% | 79% |
| Running/Jogging | 33% | 36% | 15% | 31% | 33% | 13% | 35% | 40% |
| Backpacking/Long-distance Hiking | 14% | 13% | 0% | 20% | 7% | 13% | 6% | 23% |
| Bicycling - single track/soft surface/mountain bike | 28% | 40% | 23% | 27% | 30% | 29% | 52% | 44% |
| Bicycling - hard surface | 63% | 56% | 23% | 25% | 19% | 17% | 28% | 48% |
| Horseback Riding | 1% | 1% | 0% | 3% | 0% | 4% | 1% | 0% |
| Roller Skating/Rollerblading | 3% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Skateboarding | 2% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| ATV/4-Wheel Off-Highway Riding | 4% | 5% | 18% | 11% | 7% | 8% | 10% | 13% |
| Motorbike/2-Wheel Off-Highway Riding | 13% | 6% | 56% | 15% | 11% | 25% | 20% | 13% |
| Paddling/Non-Motorized Watercraft | 35% | 23% | 13% | 36% | 19% | 42% | 15% | 29% |
| Accessing Fishing or Hunting by land or water trail/launch | 15% | 11% | 15% | 12% | 11% | 33% | 13% | 19% |
| Other | 8% | 3% | 3% | 10% | 7% | 13% | 8% | 2% |
| Total | 100% |
| <i># of Respondents</i> | 168 | 266 | 39 | 110 | 27 | 24 | 79 | 48 |

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the main purpose they have for using trails is either recreational in nature or focused on health and fitness (or both), although notably over 10% of respondents indicated that a primary purpose of trails is for transportation.

In addition, the following reasons were indicated as “other” primary purposes of trail use:

- Fun/Family/Being in nature/Relaxation (x11)
- Work/Research (x9)
- Education (x5)
- Bird watching (x4)
- Photography (x4)
- Scouting (x2)
- Hunting

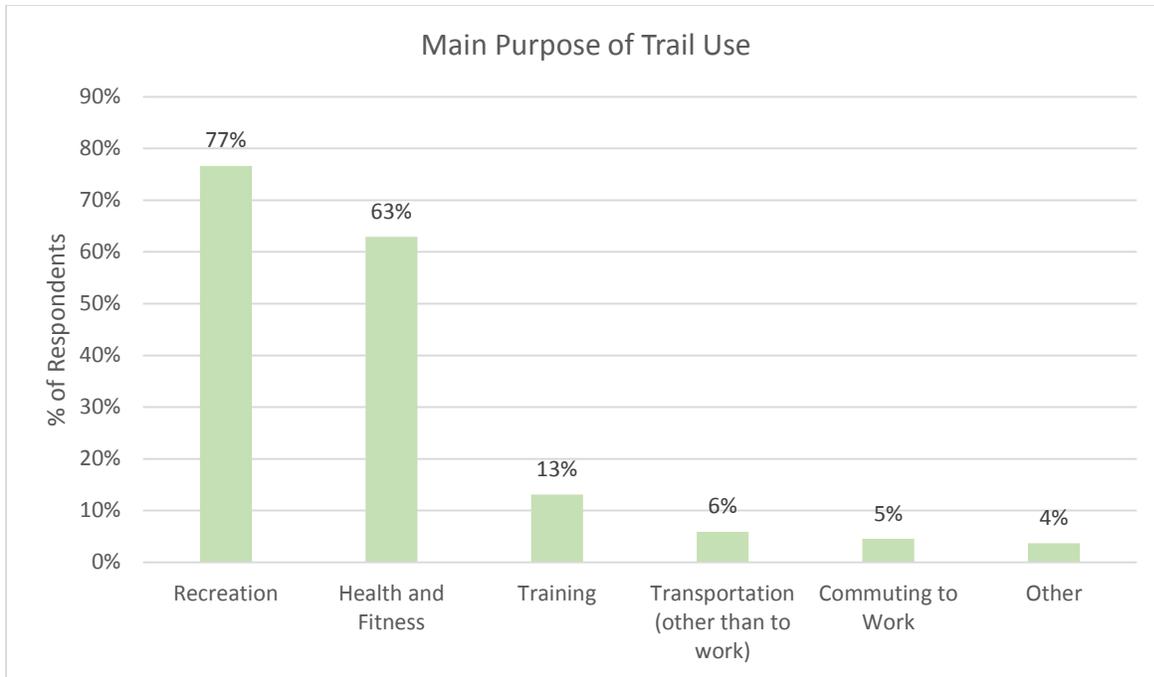


Figure 40: Main Purpose of Trail Use

Trail users report an average (mean) of 3.28 hours of trail use per visit (median = 2 hours), though answers ranged anywhere from zero to 90 hours. The majority of respondents both use trails that exist within their own community, as well as travel to trails in other areas of the state, though some respondents indicated via comments that a lack of trails for their preferred activities within their immediate area necessitates travel in order to participate.



Figure 41: Travel/Access to Trails

The largest share (44%) of respondents indicated that they generally use trails close to home for routine or everyday activities such as exercise, dog-walking, or transportation, though nearly as many indicated that they use trails for planned excursions or day trips (with many indicating that they do both). A smaller share (7%) plan multi-day trips around trail use, while ¼ use Louisiana trails for all three types of trips. “Other” responses indicated that none of these trip types reflected their use pattern, that they use trails for work purposes only, or for racing. Research suggests that typically, non-motorized trail use predominantly takes place closer to home and for routine activities, while motorized trail use by necessity more often requires a planned excursion to an OHV designated facility.

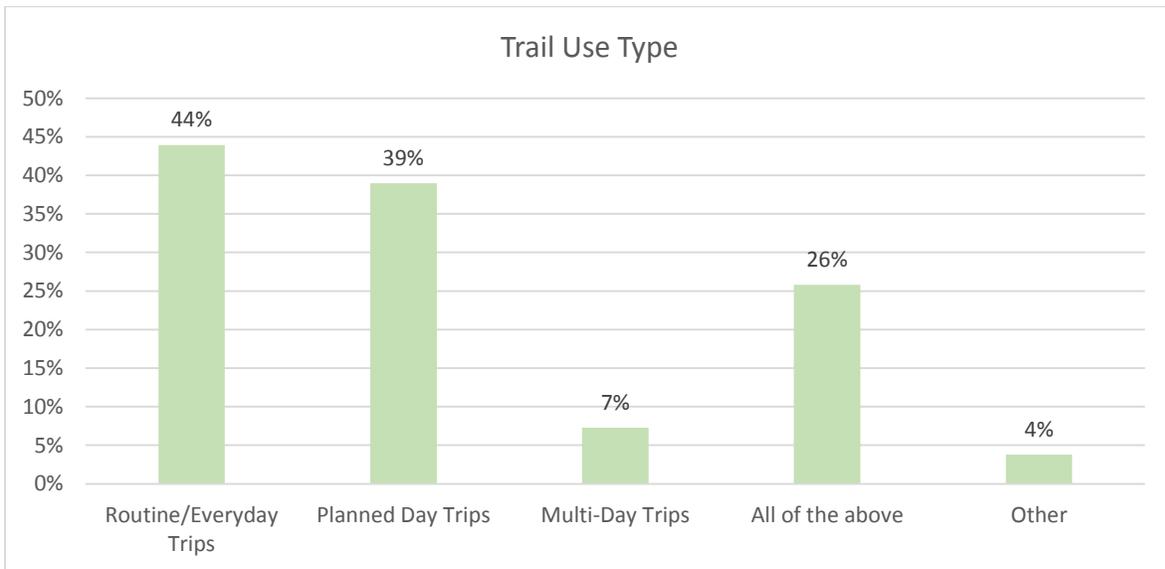


Figure 42: Trail Use Type

Respondents indicated that while they are generally satisfied with their ability to access trails for their preferred activities near their homes, and that the quality of trails is overall high, satisfaction with the variety of trails available in an average community is lower.

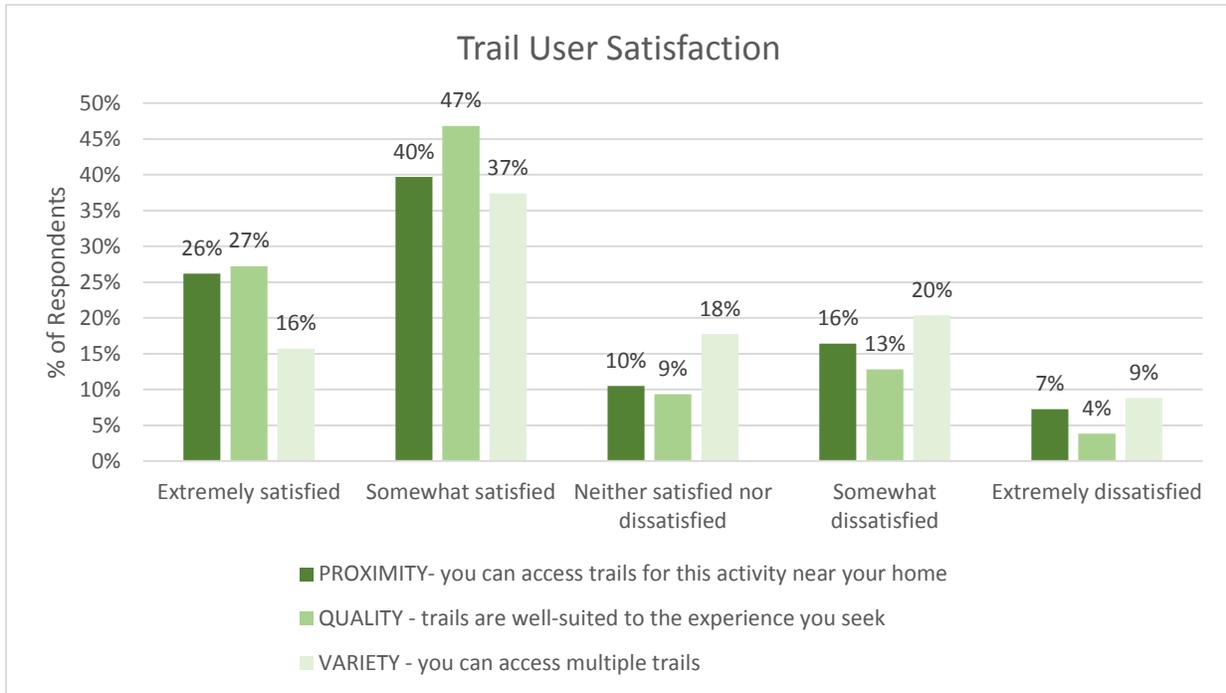


Figure 43: Trail User Satisfaction

Evaluated by region, overall satisfaction with trail proximity (extremely or somewhat satisfied) is highest in regions 5, 6, and 7, and lowest in regions 2, 3, and 8. Trail quality is perceived as highest by respondents in regions 6 and 7, and lowest in region 3. Satisfaction with trail variety exceeds 60% only in regions 6 and 7.

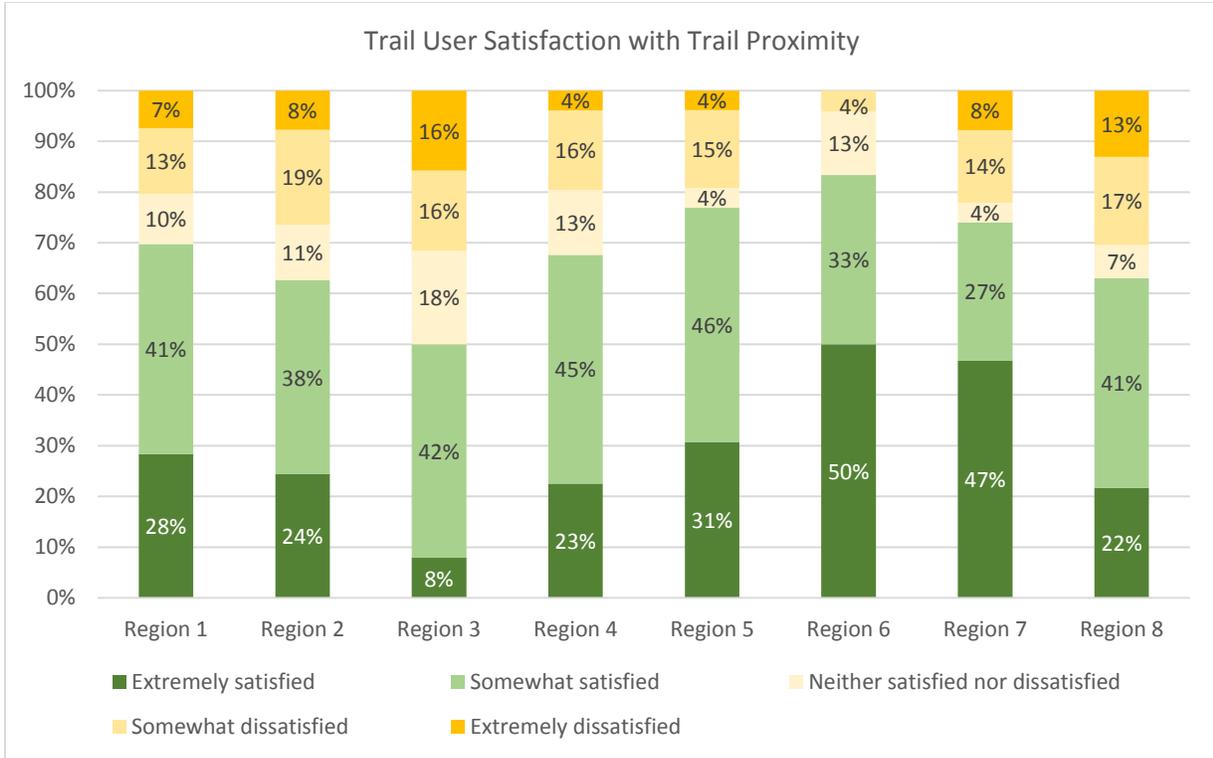


Figure 44: Trail User Satisfaction with Trail Proximity

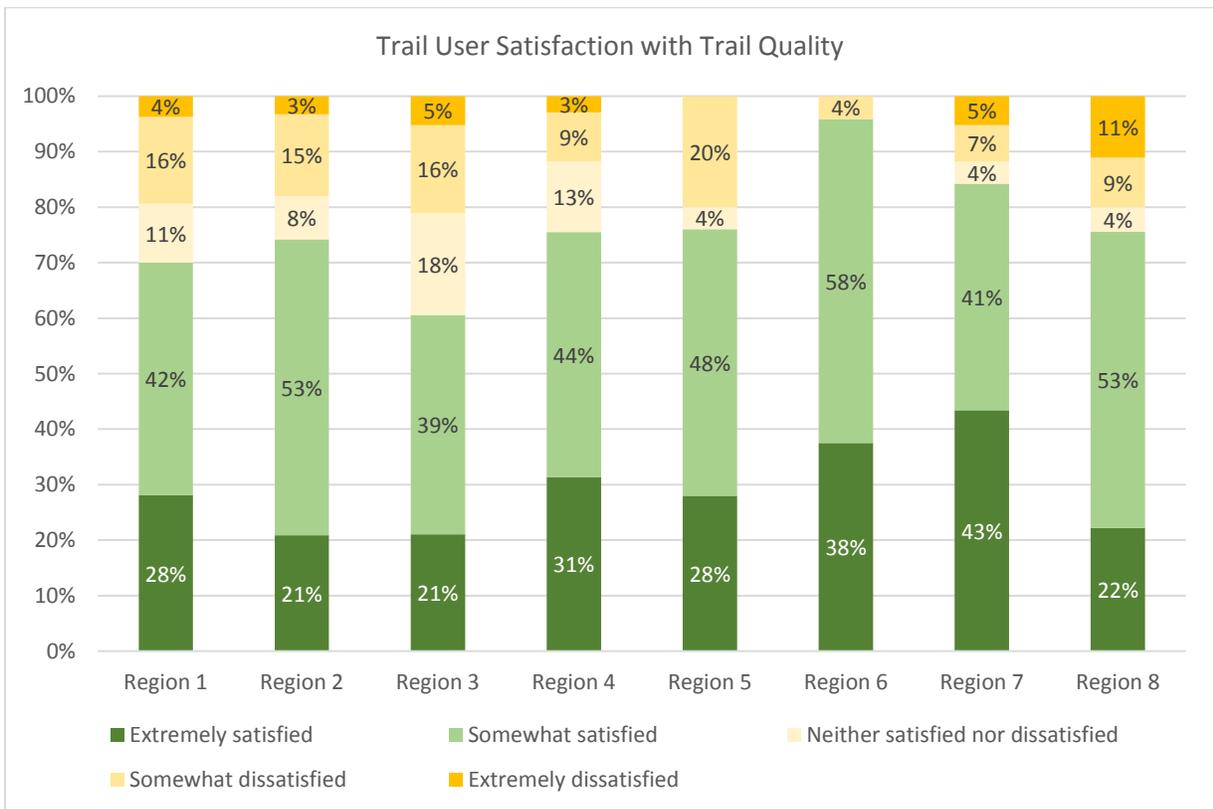


Figure 45: Trail User Satisfaction with Trail Quality

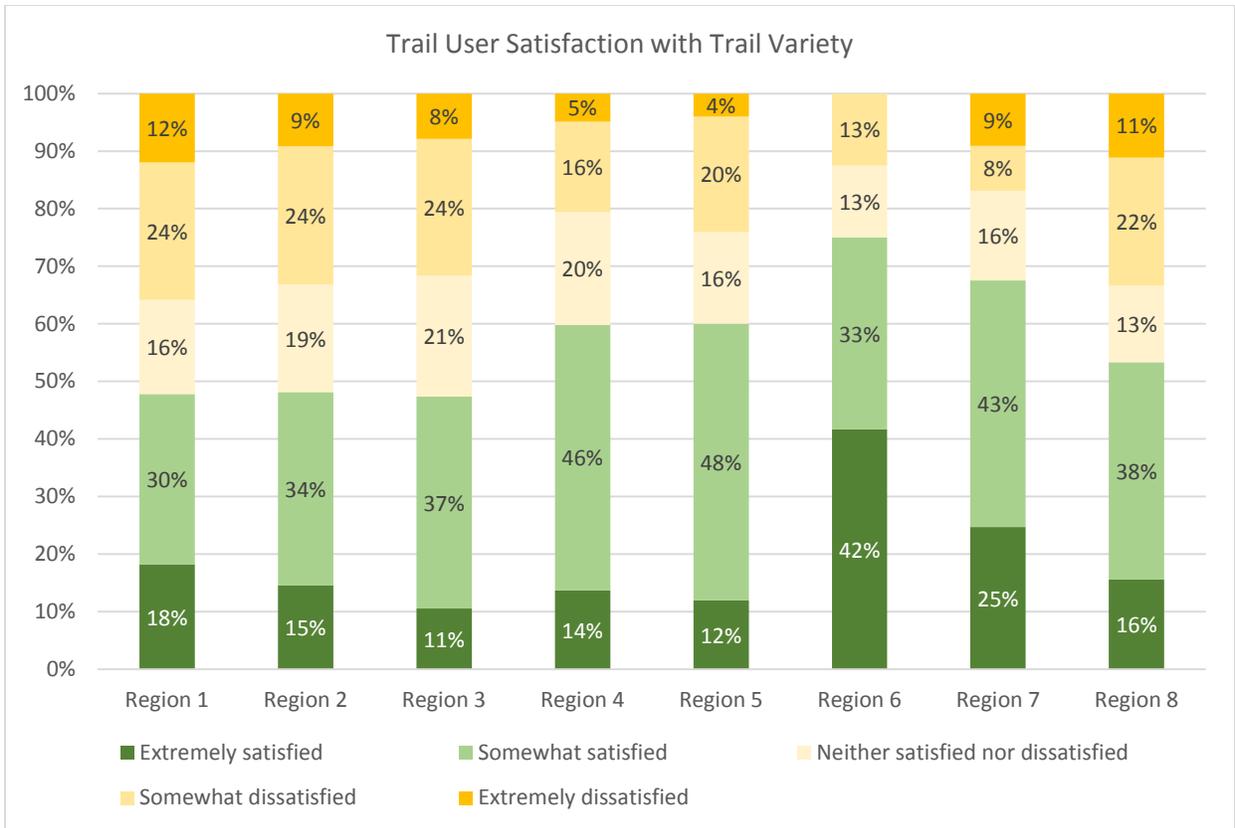


Figure 46: Trail User Satisfaction with Trail Variety

The majority of respondents indicate that opportunities to engage in their favorite trail activity or activities have increased over the last ten years, with approximately 13% indicating a decrease in trail opportunities or access.

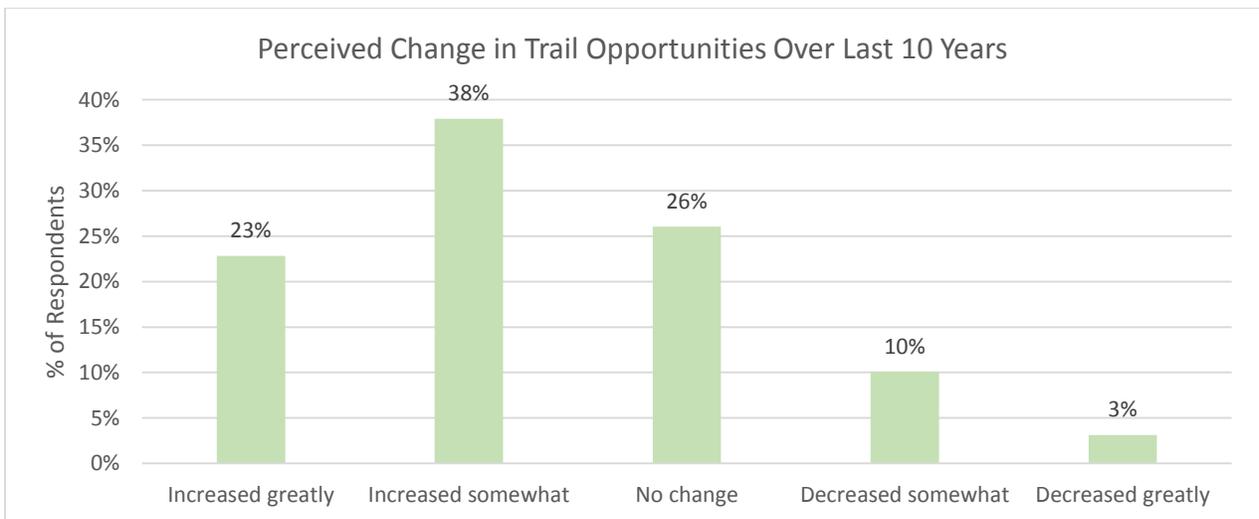


Figure 47: Perceived Change in Trail Opportunities Over Last 10 Years

Trail Priorities

Trails may be composed of various surfaces and materials depending on context and activity anticipated. Among all respondents, dirt trails were overwhelmingly preferred, followed by asphalt or concrete paths. Among “other” responses, wooden boardwalks were cited, as well as clay, fly ash, and any material as long as it is water permeable.

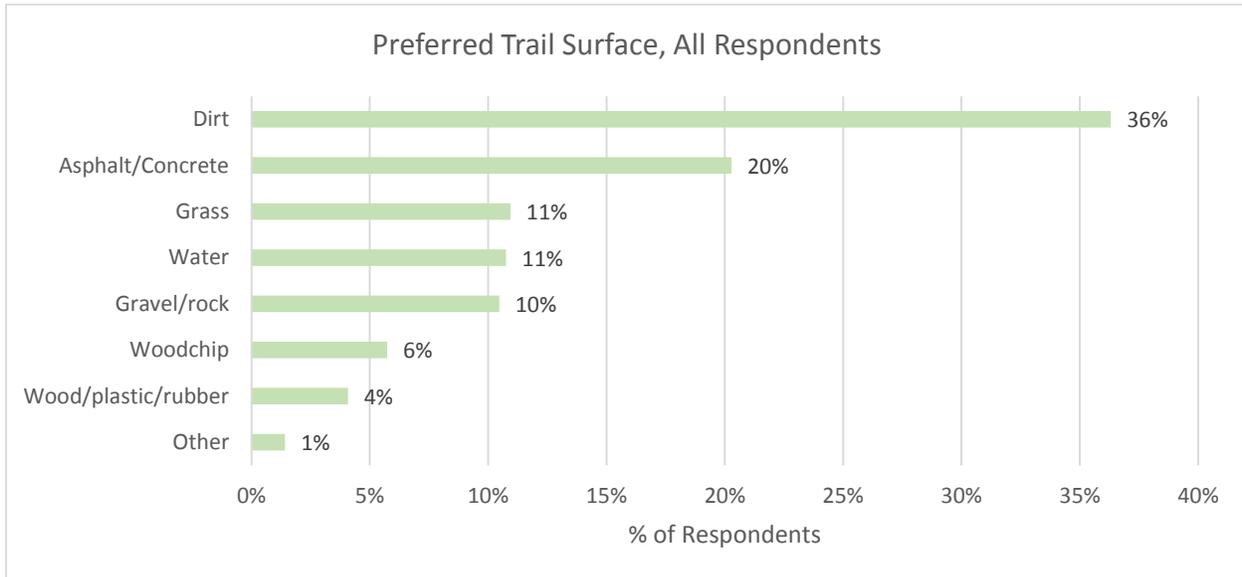


Figure 48: Preferred Trail Surface, All Respondents

Trail users were asked to identify their priorities for trail planning in their region over the next ten years, keeping in mind limited funding and land. Average (mean) priority scores, with 0 indicating “not a priority at all” and 10 indicating a top priority, are reported below across five categories of potential issues and investments: Trail construction and maintenance, trail and trailhead amenities, water trail and trailhead amenities, safety and security, and other.

Across all categories, the top ten priorities indicated included the following:

11. Protecting natural features and habitat
12. Provision of trail information online
13. Routine trail maintenance
14. More trails connecting communities and places
15. Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic)
16. Promoting users’ ability to experience the natural environment
17. Litter/trash can availability
18. Information at trail heads (maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty, etc)
19. Major trail repairs
20. Parking lot security

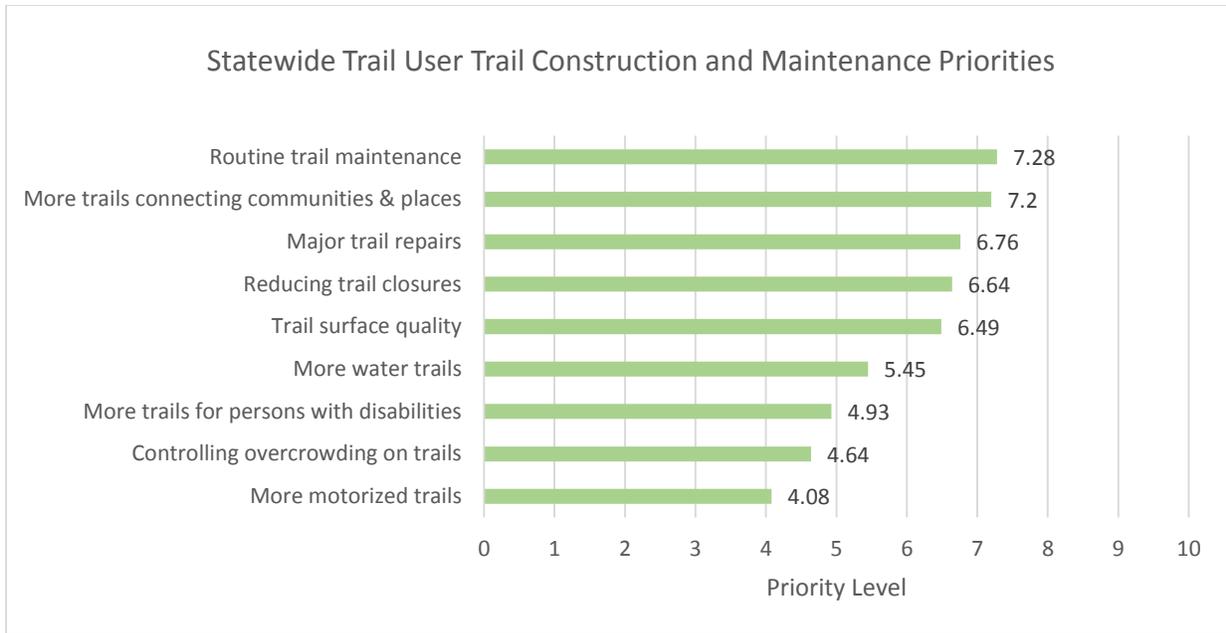


Figure 49: Statewide Trail User Trail Construction and Maintenance Priorities

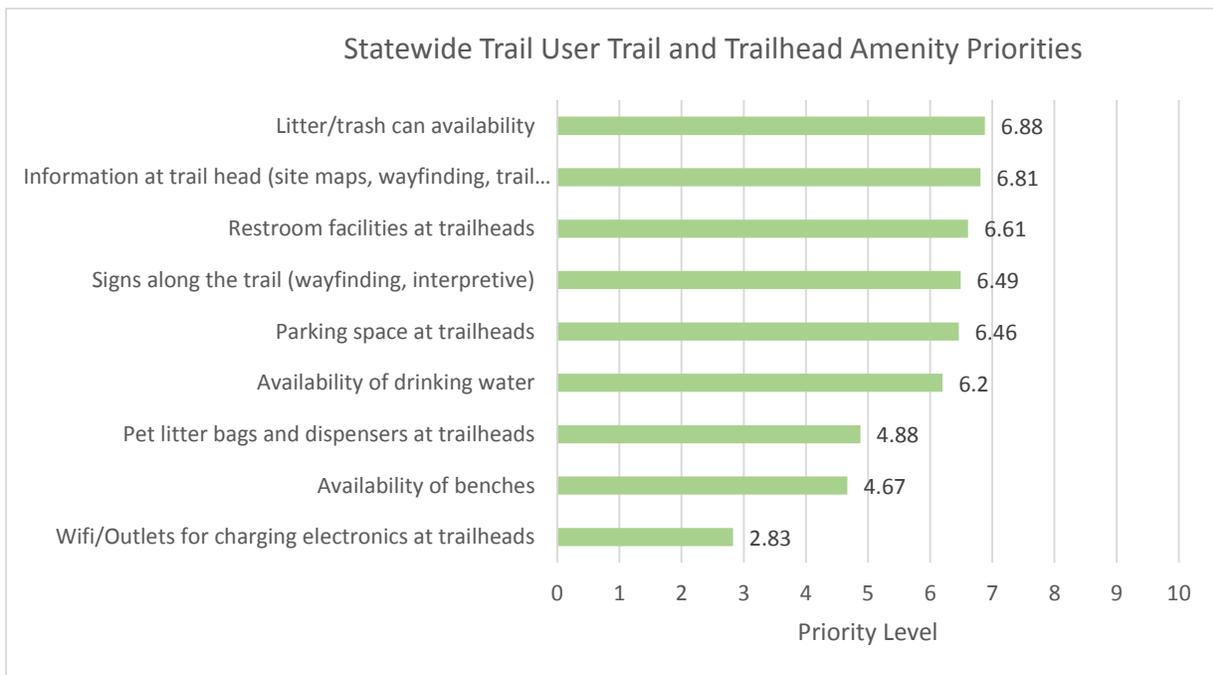


Figure 50: Statewide Trail User Trail and Trailhead Amenity Priorities

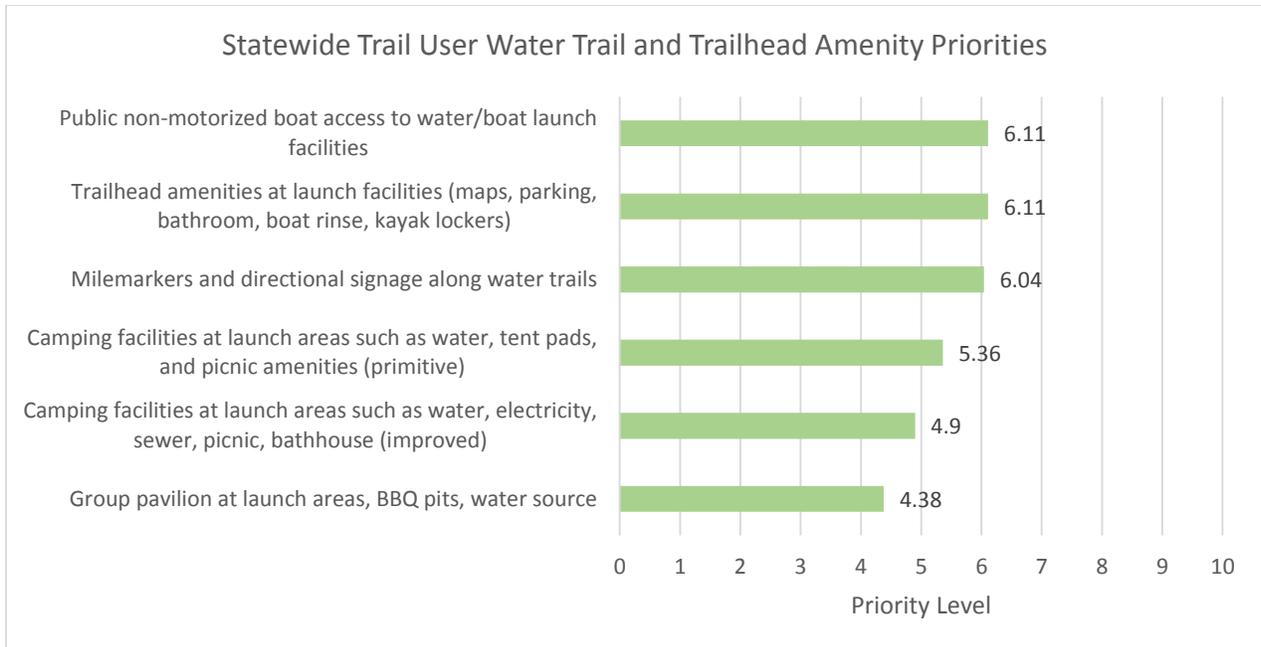


Figure 51: Statewide Trail User Water Trail and Trailhead Amenity Priorities

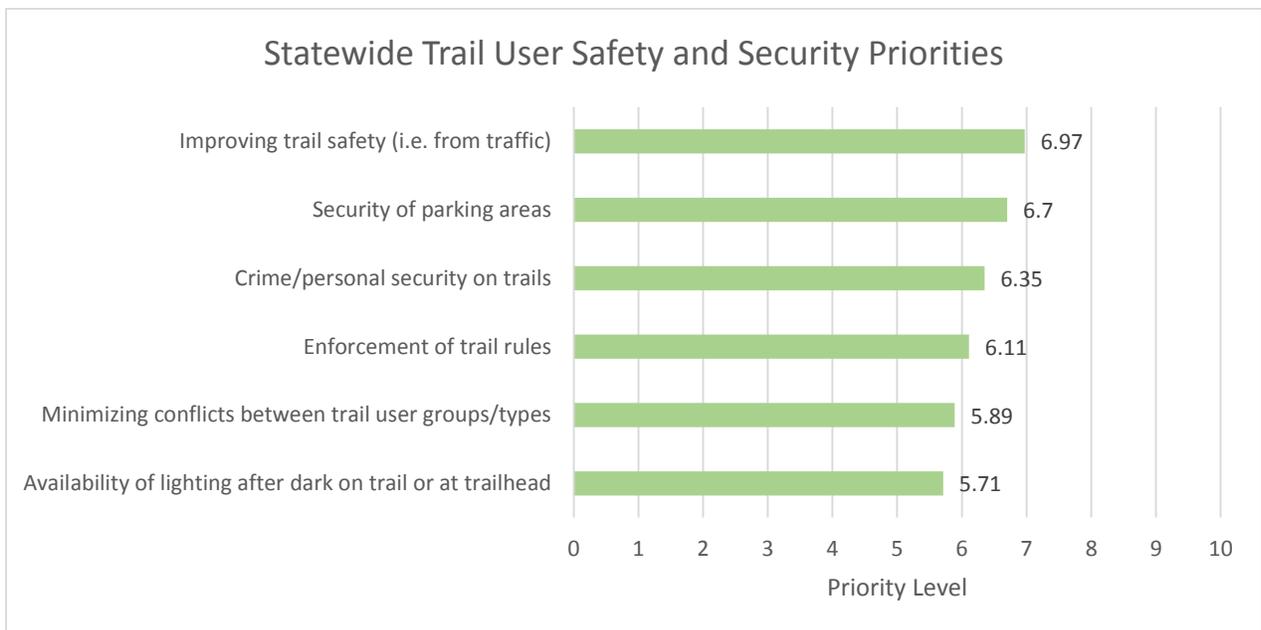


Figure 52: Statewide Trail User Safety and Security Priorities

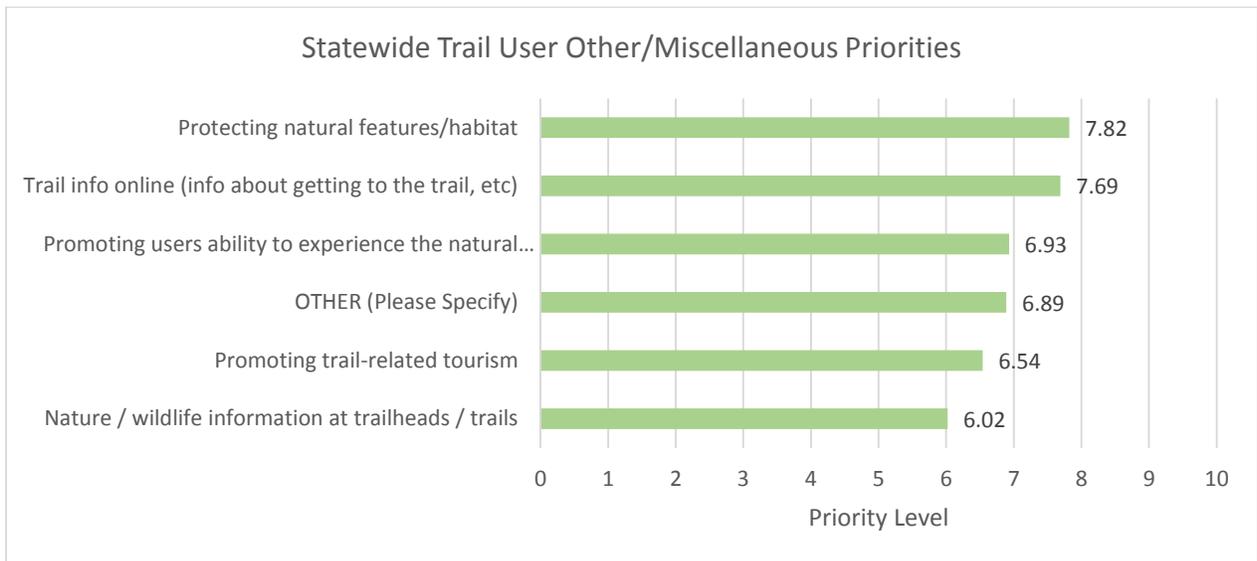


Figure 53: Statewide Trail User Other/Miscellaneous Priorities

Among the responses identified as “Other” priorities, the following issues were identified

- More access points for bike trails
- More opportunity for backpacking
- Emergency information
- Reducing erosion
- Developing school-based programs
- Encouraging communities of color to use trails
- Expanding green space in urban areas
- Ability to search easily for new trails
- Up to date information on trail closures

Regionally, protection of natural resources and habitat, as well as provision of improved information about trails online, emerge as statewide priorities with a mean respondent score of 7.5 / 10 or higher. In addition to these, the following issues were identified as top priorities in individual regions:

Region 1: *No clearly identified priorities*

Region 2:

- Trails connecting communities and places
- Improving trail safety

Region 3:

- Reducing trail closures
- More motorized trails

Region 4: *No clearly identified priorities*

Region 5:

- Trails connecting communities and places
- Litter/trash can availability

Region 6: *No clearly identified priorities***Region 7:**

- Routine trail maintenance
- Reducing trail closures

Region 8:

- Information at trailhead
- Promoting trail-related tourism

Table 17: Regional Trail Priorities by Topic Area and Region (Trail User Survey)

| Regional Trail Priorities by Topic Area and Region (Trail User Survey) | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 | Region Not Indicated | Overall Average |
| Trail Construction and Maintenance | | | | | | | | | | |
| Controlling overcrowding on trails | 4.6 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 5.2 | 3.9 | 4.3 | 4.8 | 5.2 | 4.9 | 4.6 |
| Routine Trail Maintenance | 7.1 | 7.2 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 7.3 | 6.6 | 7.7 | 7.2 | 7.7 | 7.3 |
| Major Trail Repairs | 6.5 | 7.0 | 6.2 | 6.6 | 6.8 | 5.9 | 7.1 | 6.2 | 7.0 | 6.8 |
| Reducing Trail Closures | 6.5 | 6.1 | 7.7 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 5.8 | 7.5 | 6.7 | 7.0 | 6.6 |
| Trail surface quality | 6.4 | 6.6 | 6.4 | 5.8 | 6.4 | 5.7 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 6.8 | 6.5 |
| More trails for persons with disabilities | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 4.9 |
| More trails connecting communities and places | 6.9 | 7.9 | 5.8 | 7.1 | 7.8 | 5.1 | 6.9 | 7.2 | 7.0 | 7.2 |
| More Water Trails | 5.9 | 5.6 | 3.9 | 6.4 | 5.4 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 6.1 | 4.7 | 5.4 |
| More motorized trails | 3.7 | 2.9 | 7.6 | 3.7 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.1 |
| Trail and Trailhead Amenities | | | | | | | | | | |
| Availability of drinking water | 6.2 | 6.7 | 5.6 | 6.1 | 6.6 | 4.1 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 6.0 | 6.2 |
| Availability of benches | 4.7 | 5.0 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 4.7 |
| Restroom facilities at trailheads | 6.2 | 6.9 | 6.7 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 5.4 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 6.6 | 6.6 |
| Litter/trash can availability | 6.7 | 6.8 | 7.4 | 7.2 | 7.7 | 5.8 | 6.6 | 7.4 | 6.8 | 6.9 |
| Pet litter bags and dispensers at trailheads | 5.4 | 5.1 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 2.9 | 4.8 | 5.6 | 4.5 | 4.9 |
| Information at trail head (site maps, wayfinding, trail details, wildlife info, level of difficulty etc) | 6.5 | 6.6 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 6.4 | 6.1 | 6.9 | 7.6 | 6.9 | 6.8 |
| Signs along the trail (wayfinding, interpretive) | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 2.8 |
| Wifi/Outlets for charging electronics at trailheads | 6.2 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 6.4 | 6.2 | 5.8 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 6.7 | 6.5 |
| Parking space at trailheads | 6.1 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 6.1 | 6.2 | 5.3 | 7.0 | 6.9 | 6.7 | 6.5 |
| Water Trail and Trailhead Amenities | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trailhead amenities at launch facilities (maps, parking, bathroom, boat rinse, kayak lockers) | 6.4 | 6.3 | 5.2 | 6.2 | 6.5 | 5.9 | 5.4 | 6.5 | 5.8 | 6.1 |
| Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, tent pads, and picnic amenities (primitive) | 5.1 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 6.2 | 5.2 | 5.1 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 5.4 |
| Camping facilities at launch areas such as water, electricity, sewer, picnic, bathhouse (improved) | 4.6 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 4.5 | 5.2 | 5.0 | 5.4 | 4.9 | 4.9 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Group pavilion at launch areas, BBQ pits, water source | 4.2 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 4.4 | 2.8 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Milemarkers and directional signage along water trails | 6.0 | 6.1 | 4.5 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 5.3 | 6.2 | 6.7 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Public non-motorized boat access to water/boat launch facilities | 6.4 | 6.2 | 4.2 | 6.6 | 6.7 | 5.1 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 5.8 | 6.1 |
| Safety and Security | | | | | | | | | | |
| Minimizing conflicts between trail user groups/types | 5.7 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 5.9 | 5.1 | 4.4 | 5.7 | 5.9 | 6.2 | 5.9 |
| Security of parking areas | 6.4 | 7.0 | 6.6 | 6.4 | 5.8 | 5.5 | 6.4 | 7.2 | 6.9 | 6.7 |
| Crime/personal security on trails | 6.3 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 5.6 | 5.9 | 5.1 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 6.2 | 6.3 |
| Improving trail safety (i.e. from traffic) | 7.3 | 7.6 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 5.5 | 6.7 | 7.6 | 6.7 | 7.0 |
| Enforcement of trail rules | 5.9 | 6.2 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 4.7 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 7.3 | 6.2 | 6.1 |
| Availability of lighting after dark on trail or at trailhead | 5.4 | 6.6 | 4.6 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 3.8 | 5.7 | 6.5 | 5.3 | 5.7 |
| Other | | | | | | | | | | |
| Promoting users ability to experience the natural environment | 7.2 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 7.0 | 5.7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| Nature / wildlife information at trailheads / trails | 6.4 | 5.9 | 6.1 | 6.0 | 6.3 | 4.6 | 5.5 | 6.9 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Protecting natural features/habitat | 8.2 | 7.7 | 6.8 | 7.9 | 8.2 | 7.6 | 7.7 | 7.5 | 7.8 | 7.8 |
| Trail info online (info about getting to the trail, etc) | 7.6 | 7.5 | 7.7 | 7.7 | 7.9 | 6.8 | 7.9 | 8.5 | 7.8 | 7.7 |
| Promoting trail-related tourism | 6.0 | 6.3 | 6.6 | 7.4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 7.3 | 8.0 | 6.4 | 6.5 |
| OTHER | 7.2 | 7.2 | 5.5 | 6.9 | 5.6 | 5.8 | 8.0 | 6.8 | 6.7 | 6.9 |

For motorized trails specifically, respondents were asked to identify their top three funding priorities for the next ten years. Trail maintenance emerges as the top concern, followed by increasing availability of single track motorcycle trails, and preservation of natural resources/minimizing damage in trail areas. Responses listed as “other” included widening trails or considering making some trails one-direction only, increasing creating more separate spaces for 4-wheel and 2-wheel vehicle activities, adding trail amenities such as bathrooms, water faucets, emergency contact buttons and exercise equipment, reducing noise impacts, and clearing roots from trailways.

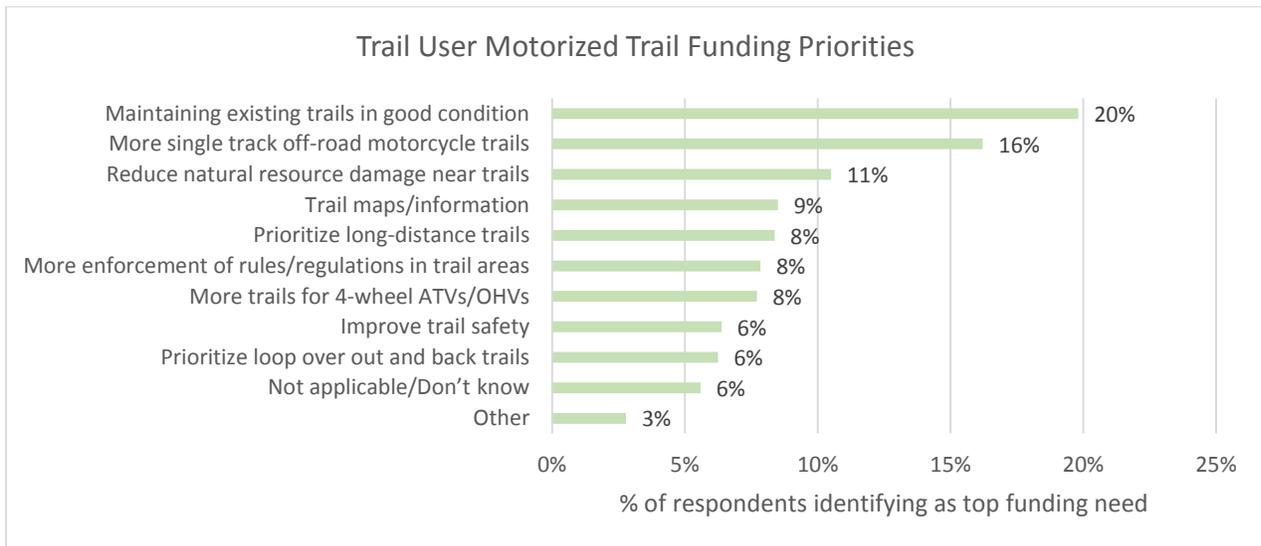


Figure 54: Trail User Motorized Trail Funding Priorities

Evaluated by region, trail maintenance and route expansion for motorcycles are broadly supported, while minimizing damage to natural resources and expanding 4-wheel trail facilities are identified as top priorities in at least two regions of the state. In Region 3, long distance trails are also identified as a need, while region 7 cites a preference for loop trails and also desires more enforcement of trail rules. Region 4 identified a lack of adequate trail information as a top priority to address.

Table 18: Top Three Motorized (OHV) Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey)

| Top Three Motorized (OHV) Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey) | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| More single track off-road motorcycle trails | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x |
| Maintaining existing trails in good condition | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Reduce natural resource damage near trails | x | x | | x | x | x | | |
| Prioritize loop over out and back trails | | | | | | | x | |
| Trail maps/information | | | | x | | | | |
| More trails for 4-wheel ATVs/OHVs | | | | | x | | | x |
| More enforcement of rules/regulations in trail areas | | | | | | | x | |
| Prioritize long-distance trails | | | x | | | | | |
| Improve trail safety | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicates a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

Among users of non-motorized trails (excluding water trails), the top funding needs identified for prioritization over the next ten years included more trails, improved trail maintenance, and better connections within trail systems and into local pedestrian and bicycle networks. “Other” responses included a call for improved litter abatement, more long-distance trails, more trails specifically in smaller cities and towns, more online information and communication (including information about opportunities to get involved or volunteer with trails), more trails suitable for mountain bike use, and additional security measures such as cameras.

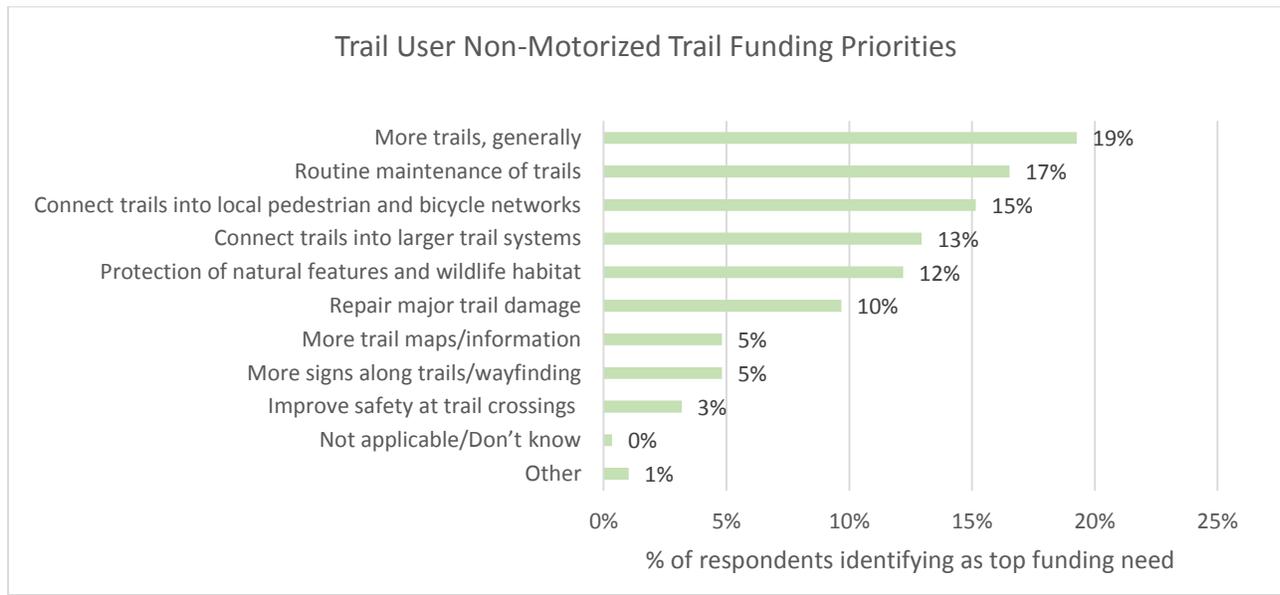


Figure 55: Trail User Non-Motorized Trail Funding Priorities

While most regions cite a desire for more trails, better maintenance, and improved connections to local pedestrian and bicycle networks, regions 4, 5, and 6 also indicate a desire for ecological conservation, while region 2 indicates a need of improved connections among trails to form a network and region 6 cites major repairs as top funding needs.

Table 19: Top Three Non-Motorized Trail Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey)

| Top Three Non-Motorized Trail Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey) | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| More trails, generally | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| Connect trails into local pedestrian and bicycle networks | x | x | x | | x | | x | x |
| Routine maintenance of trails | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Protection of natural features and wildlife habitat | | | | x | x | x | | |
| Connect trails into larger trail systems | | x | | | | | | |
| More signs along trails/wayfinding | | | | | | | | |
| Repair major trail damage | | | | | | x | | |
| More trail maps/information | | | | | | | | |
| Improve safety at trail crossings | | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

*more than three priorities indicates a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices

Finally, for those who indicated an interest in or use of water/paddle trails, a general call for increased access to waterways, particularly including boat launch facilities for non-motorized boaters, emerged, as well as clearer designation of water trails through signage. Some users also identified security at parking/launch areas, better promotion of existing water trails, litter abatement, and preservation of natural habitat as key additional concerns.

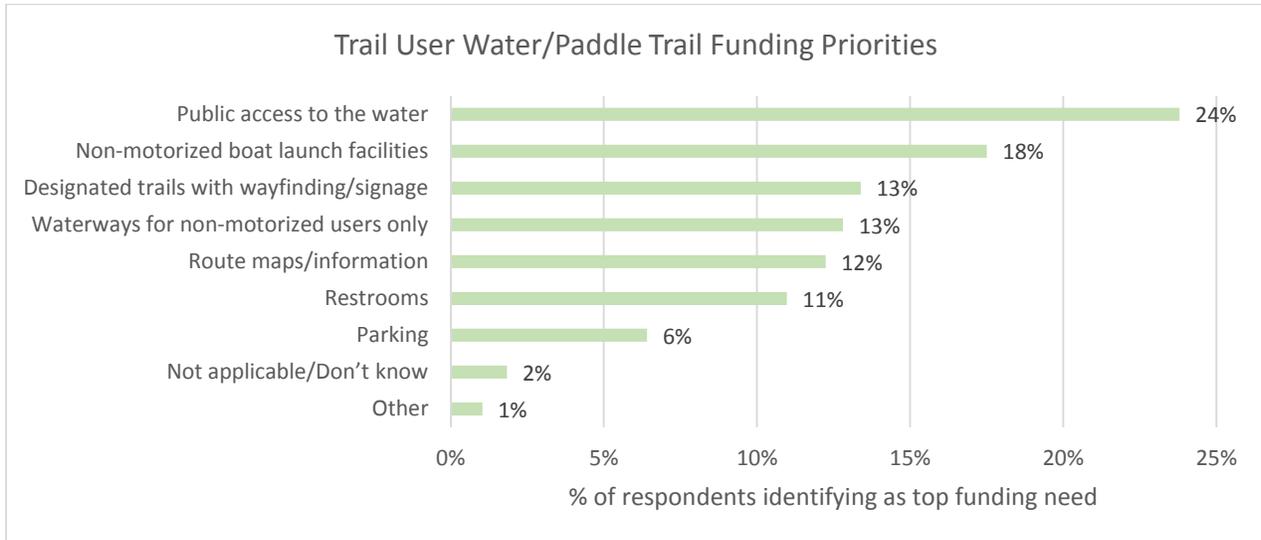


Figure 56: Trail User Water/Paddle Trail Funding Priorities

All regions prioritized increasing public access to the water, while a variety of other potential funding priorities were identified in each region, with launch facilities and trail information emerging as common issues in multiple regions.

Table 20: Top Three Water Trail Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey)

| Top Three Water Trail Funding Priorities by Region (Trail User Survey) | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Public access to the water | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Non-motorized boat launch facilities | x | x | | x | x | | | x |
| Restrooms | | x | | | | | | |
| Route maps/information | | | | x | | x | | x |
| Parking | | | | | | | | |
| Designated trails with wayfinding/signage | | | | | x | x | x | x |
| Waterways for non-motorized users only | x | | | | | | x | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

**more than three priorities indicates a tie, fewer than three indicates even distribution of responses across choices*

Demand exists for a wide variety of trail-related activities in Louisiana. Asked which activities the LRTP should prioritize with respect to creation of new trail opportunities over the next ten years to meet existing or anticipated demand for recreation, commuting, or other trail uses, respondents indicated the strongest support for walking/running and bicycling trails, followed by paddle trails (12% of respondents), long-distance hiking trails (10%), and motorized trails (8% combined).

Respondents also highlighted different categories of activities or needs beyond mode as “other” responses to where the state should invest:

- Commuting/transportation trails/activities
- Maintenance, over new trails
- Zip lines/canopy tours
- Wildlife/Birding/Photography/natural areas
- Wheelchair accessibility

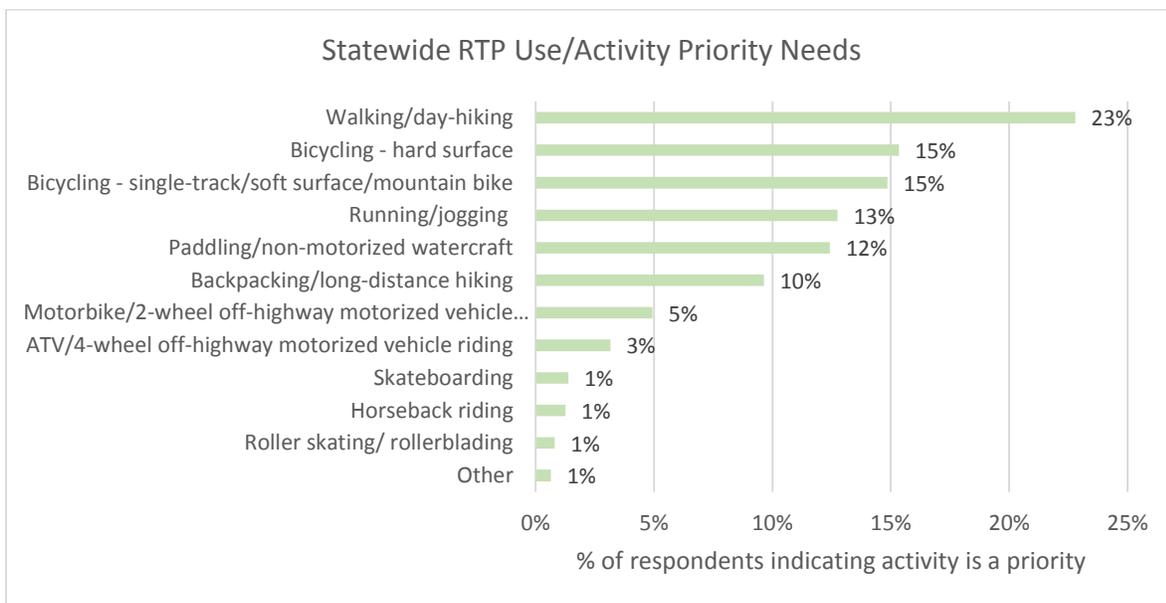


Figure 57: Statewide LRTP Use/Activity Priority Needs

While walking/day hiking was identified as a priority activity in all regions of the state, bicycling priorities were split, with regions 3, 5, 6, and 7 prioritizing soft surface/mountain biking, and regions 1, and 2 (New Orleans and Baton Rouge) reflecting a preference for paved bicycle trails. Region 8 identified both as priorities. Backpacking was identified as a priority activity in regions 4 and 6, while paddling was cited as one of the most important activities in regions 1, 4, and 6. Motorized trail activities were cited as a top priority activity only in Region 3, however, as noted above this is likely reflective of stronger overall representation of non-motorized trail user community in the survey results.

Table 21: Top Three Priority Trail Activities by Region (Trail User Survey)

| Top Three Priority Trail Activities by Region (Trail User Survey) | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 |
| Walking/day-hiking | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Running/jogging | | x | | | x | | x | |
| Backpacking/long-distance hiking | | | | x | | x | | |
| Bicycling - single-track/soft surface/mountain bike | | | x | | x | x | x | x |
| Bicycling - hard surface | x | x | | | | | | x |
| Horseback riding | | | | | | | | |
| Roller skating/ rollerblading | | | | | | | | |
| Skateboarding | | | | | | | | |
| ATV/4-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding | | | | | | | | |
| Motorbike/2-wheel off-highway motorized vehicle riding | | | x | | | | | |
| Paddling/non-motorized watercraft | x | | | x | | x | | |
| Other | | | | | | | | |

Respondent Classification

As suggested above, this survey, distributed through an open-source link online to as many groups and individuals presumed to have an interest in trails and/or represent a constituency of users does not reflect a statistically random sample of Louisiana residents, and results should not be interpreted to reflect the needs of all current (or especially, potential) trail users.

Men were somewhat overrepresented in the survey respondent sample, with the majority of respondents between ages 18 and 64. Perhaps more critically, the overwhelming majority of respondents identified as white and non-Hispanic, which may be indicative of a need for enhanced outreach to minority communities throughout the state, but is certainly reflective of the survey distribution method and gaps in who received an invitation to and/or had access to participate in the survey. Due to sample size and a lack of information about overall trail user characteristics, no attempt was made to weight the survey results. Future outreach efforts focusing on the needs and priorities of underrepresented demographic groups, as well as to any communities (geographically speaking, or in terms of trail usage) who are not adequately represented in these findings.

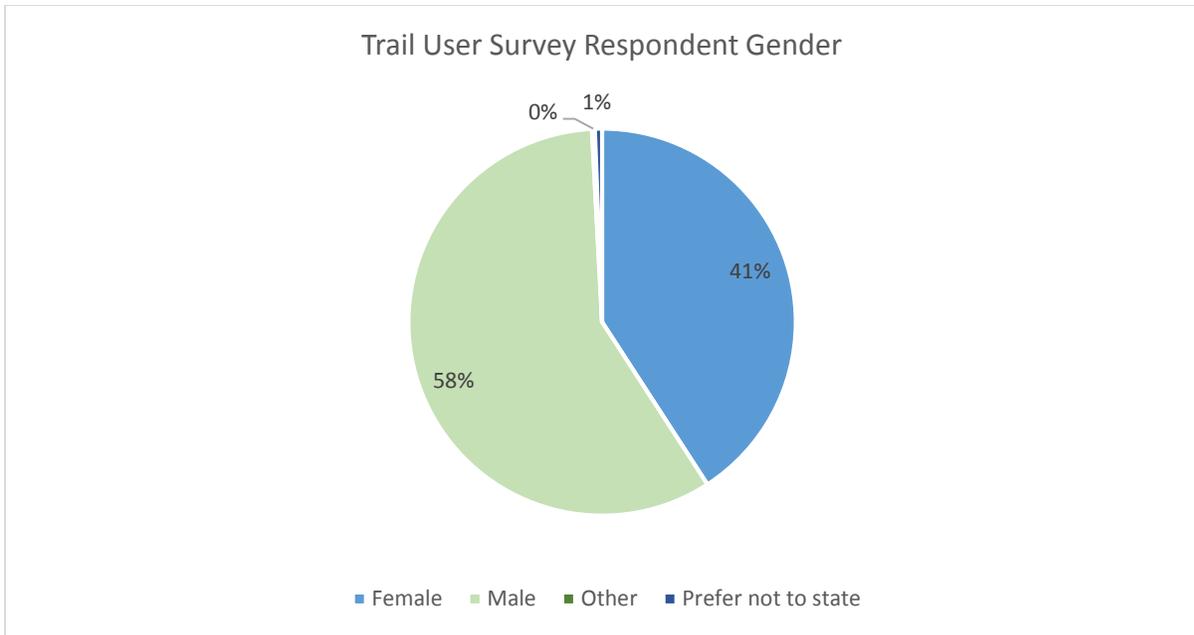


Figure 58: Trail User Survey Respondent Gender

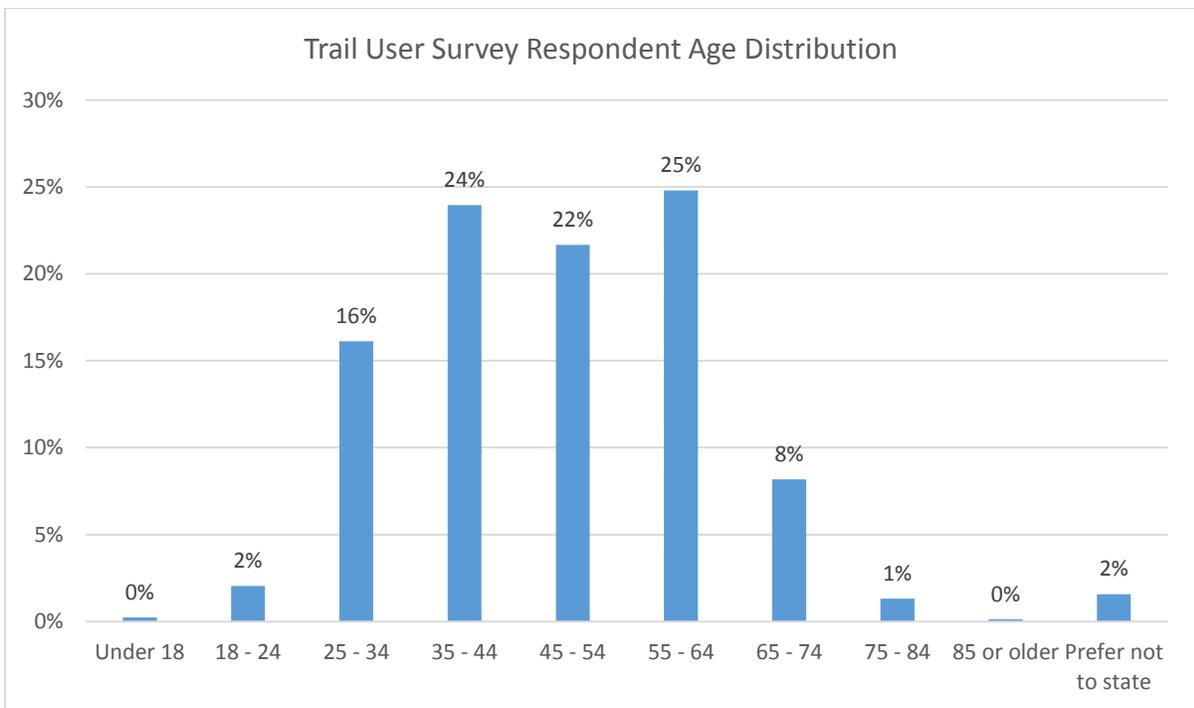


Figure 59: Trail User Survey Respondent Age Distribution

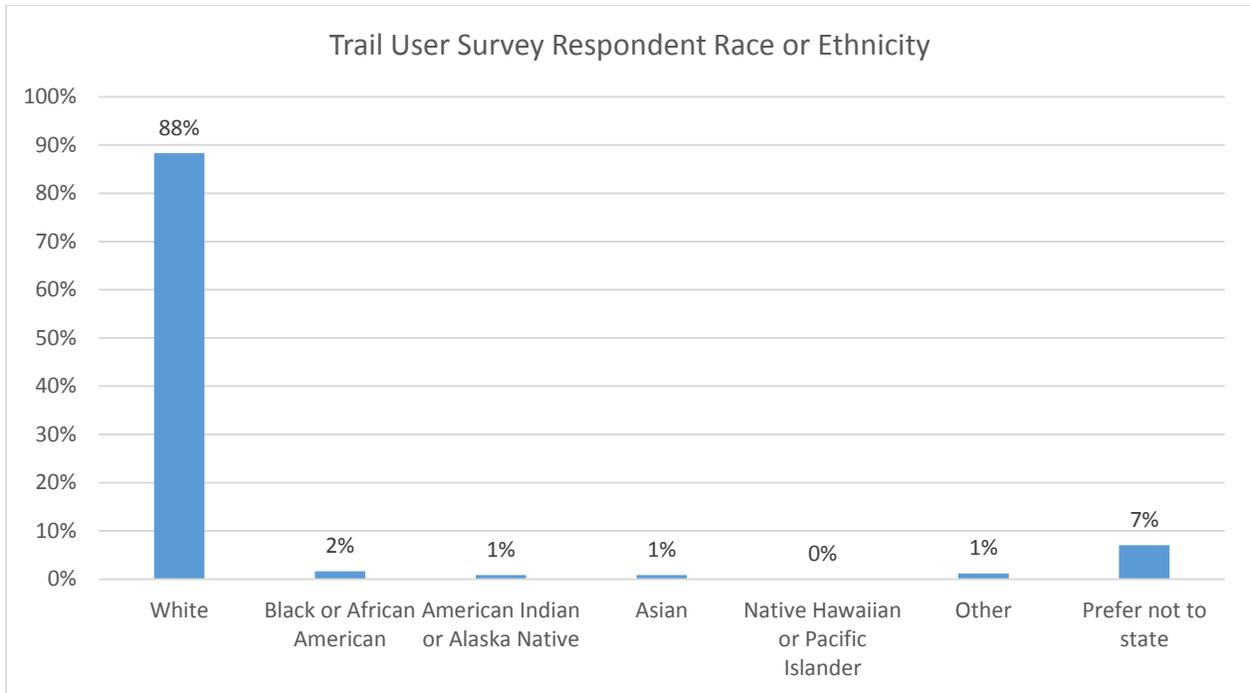


Figure 60: Trail User Survey Respondent Race or Ethnicity

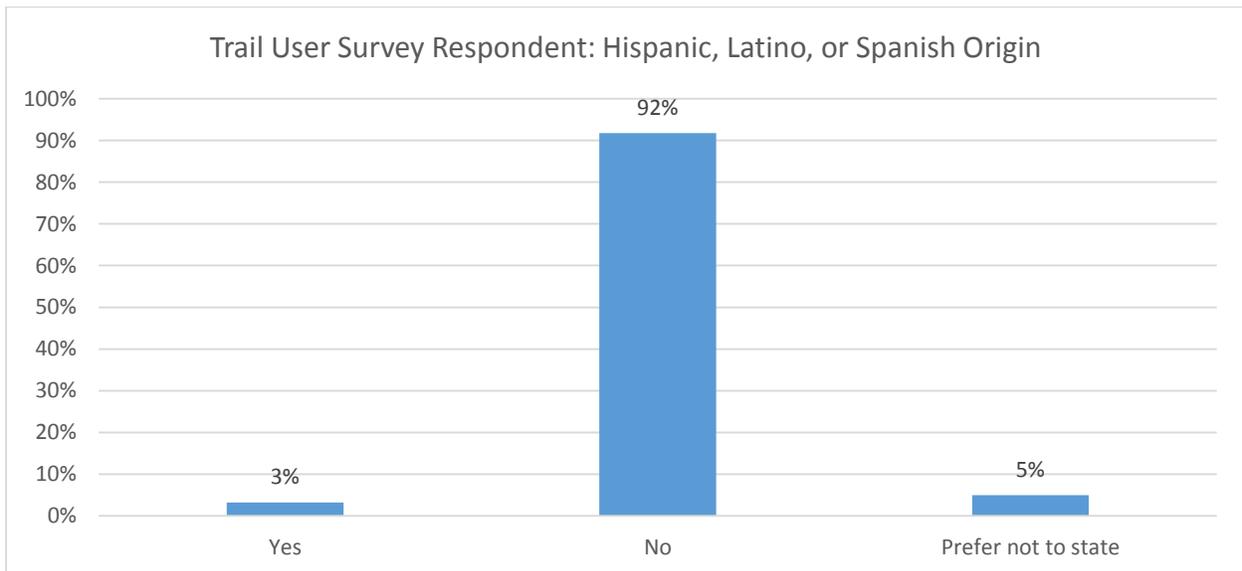


Figure 61: Trail User Survey Respondent: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin

D. Stakeholder Database

(See Attached Excel File)

E. Trails Spatial Database

(See Attached Excel/GIS Files)