Trails
Strategic Plan 2026-2030

Executive Summary

The Paso del Norte Health Foundation's (Health Foundation) 2026–2030 Trails Strategic Plan builds on nearly a decade of leadership in advancing the Paso del Norte (PdN) Trail as a public health investment. The plan prioritizes completing the PdN Trail spine, strengthening the Friends of the Trail program, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the PdN Trail system. The Health Foundation's vision is to position the PdN Trail as a regional asset that supports physical activity, promotes health, and prevents disease across El Paso County.

Regular physical activity is essential to preventing chronic disease, improving mental health, and supporting healthy aging. Yet in El Paso County, nearly one-third of adults report no leisure-time physical activity. The PdN Trail addresses this gap by building safe, accessible, and connected places for recreational walking and cycling, active transportation, and making physical activity an easy, everyday option.

The 2026–2030 Strategic Plan focuses on four approaches:

1. Completing the PdN Trail spine
2. Establishing a Friends of the Trail program
3. Ensuring safe, high-quality trail experiences through long-term sustainability
4. Expanding the PdN Trail system beyond the spine

The Health Foundation will continue to track funding progress, construction status, and the geographic coverage of trail segments, while also monitoring the Friends of the Trail program's fundraising and community engagement performance. In addition, trail consultants will design and implement a trail user survey to support future planning grants and community engagement. Together, these measures will help ensure that trail investments translate into tangible improvements in access, use, and long-term sustainability.

Key Definitions

The strategic plan frequently uses the following key terms.

PdN Trail System: A countywide connected network of multi-use trails for walking, biking, and active transportation across El Paso County. The PdN Trail System includes the main trail spine, neighborhood connections, and loops and spurs to destinations. Throughout this strategic plan, "PdN Trail" refers to the PdN Trail System.

PdN Trail spine: The primary linear trail identified in the PdN Trail Master Plan that forms the backbone of the trail system. The spine is approximately 70 miles long and spans El Paso County from the Texas-New Mexico state line to Tornillo, Texas.

Trail segment: A defined portion of the PdN Trail, typically representing a single constructed or planned section. Trail segments are often named for their geographic location.

Friends of the Trail: A program of the PdN Trail Foundation, a fund of the Paso del Norte Community Foundation, established to support fundraising, programming, promotion, and long-term stewardship of the PdN Trail.

Trail Stakeholder Group: A group of government staff and community representatives who provide input, coordination, and strategic guidance to support trail planning, funding alignment, and implementation.

Trail Technical Workgroup: A group of government staff with technical expertise in transportation, engineering, and trail development who support planning, design, and implementation of trail projects in their jurisdictions.

Accomplishments and Challenges from 2022-2025

The Paso del Norte Heatlh Foundation's 2025 Physical Activity Strategic Plan prioritized the development and promotion the Paso del Norte Trail. The Health Foundation convened key stakeholders to advance funding applications, provided expert technical assistance, and tracked progress. The Health Foundation also promoted PdN Trail through events and social media. As a result, substantial progress was made, especially in securing funding for design and construction. Key accomplishments include:

- Over $75M secured for the design and construction of over 31 miles of trail. These segments are expected to be completed by 2030. See figure 1 for trail development status.
- Over 100 new trees planted on the Playa Drain Trail, a PdN Trail segment.
- A promotional trail campaign in 2022-23 attracted over 800 residents to events on the Playa Drain Trail.
- Trail consultants created and maintain a trail inventory of amenities and trail conditions of completed trail segments to assist with maintenance and identification of grant opportunities.
- Trail consultants and the Trail Stakeholder Group established trail wayfinding guidelines to ensure consistency in signage.
- The Friends of the Trail program conducted trail walks, clean-ups, and tree plantings in 2023-2025 and secured small grants ($30,000 total) for trees.
- Trail consultants secured over $290K in funding for trail improvements to the Rio Grande River Park Trail in 2025.

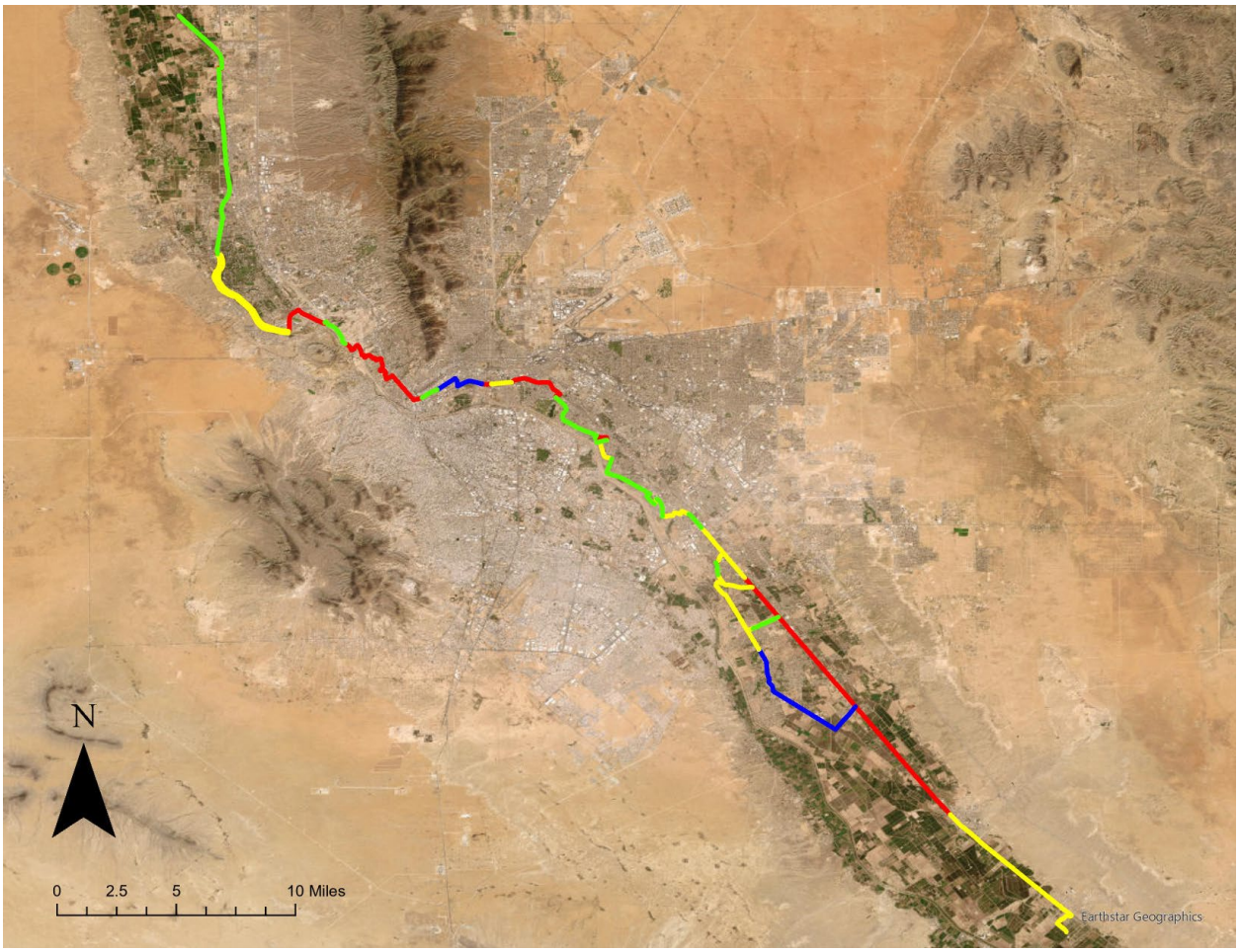


Figure 1. PdN Trail Development: Green segments are complete, yellow segments are funded, red segments are unfunded, and blue segments were funded in 2025.

The initiative also encountered some setbacks and challenges that will be addressed in the 2030 strategic plan. Specific challenges include:

- Competing priorities for transportation funding.
- Changes in right-of-way agreements necessitating changes in trail segment alignments.
- The Rio Grande River Park Trail is over 20 years old and needs repairs and improvements. The Playa Drain Trail is newer, but wear and tear are starting to be seen.
- The Friends of the Trail program would benefit from consistent staff or consulting support.

High-level Goals

1: Complete a connected PdN Trail spine

The Health Foundation will lead and coordinate efforts to complete a continuous, connected PdN Trail spine by positioning all remaining unfunded segments for funding and construction in partnership with local governments and transportation agencies, through the Trail Stakeholder Group and Trail Technical Workgroup. The Health Foundation, with the support of trail consultants (currently LOI Engineers), will convene these groups to finalize trail alignments,

advance design and engineering, and pursue competitive funding opportunities. The Health Foundation may provide funding for priority segments. A list of the unfunded trail spine segments can be found in Appendix B.

Theory of Change

By completing a continuous trail spine, residents will have safe, reliable availability to walking and cycling routes, making regular physical activity an easy, everyday option.

Key Deliverable

- Funding for all remaining gaps in the PdN Trail spine will be pursued by 2030.

2: Establish a Friends of the Trail organization

The Health Foundation will fund and establish a Friends of the Trail program to activate trail use, build community ownership, and sustain long-term fundraising. Health Foundation staff will also provide visioning and leadership support to the Friends of the Trail staff and monitor progress towards goals.

Theory of Change

A dedicated, community-based organization will raise funds and lead engagement and programming, enhancing the trail experience for users.

Key Deliverables

- Friends of the Trail program plan and related pro forma will be completed by November 2026.
- Annual fundraising and community engagement targets will be established and tracked.

3: Ensure safe, high-quality trail experiences through long-term sustainability

The Health Foundation will lead the development of a sustainable maintenance and branding framework that ensures consistent, safe, and high-quality trail experiences across the PdN Trail system, in collaboration with trail consultants and the Trail Technical Workgroup.

Theory of Change

Consistent maintenance and clear, cohesive branding will improve safety, usability, and public confidence, encouraging regular trail use and protecting long-term investments in physical activity infrastructure.

Key Deliverable

- Maintenance and branding plans completed by December 2027.

4: Expand the PdN Trail system beyond the spine

The Health Foundation will advance trail connections that link neighborhoods and key destinations to the PdN Trail spine, expanding access and increasing opportunities for everyday physical activity. Trail consultants and Friends of the Trail staff will support these efforts.

Theory of Change

Connecting neighborhoods and destinations to the trail spine will reduce barriers to access, integrate physical activity into daily routines, and extend health benefits to more residents.

Key Deliverable

- Priority loops, spurs, and neighborhood connections identified, mapped, and monitored on an ongoing basis.

- Utility easements ideal for trail development identified, mapped, and monitored on an ongoing basis.

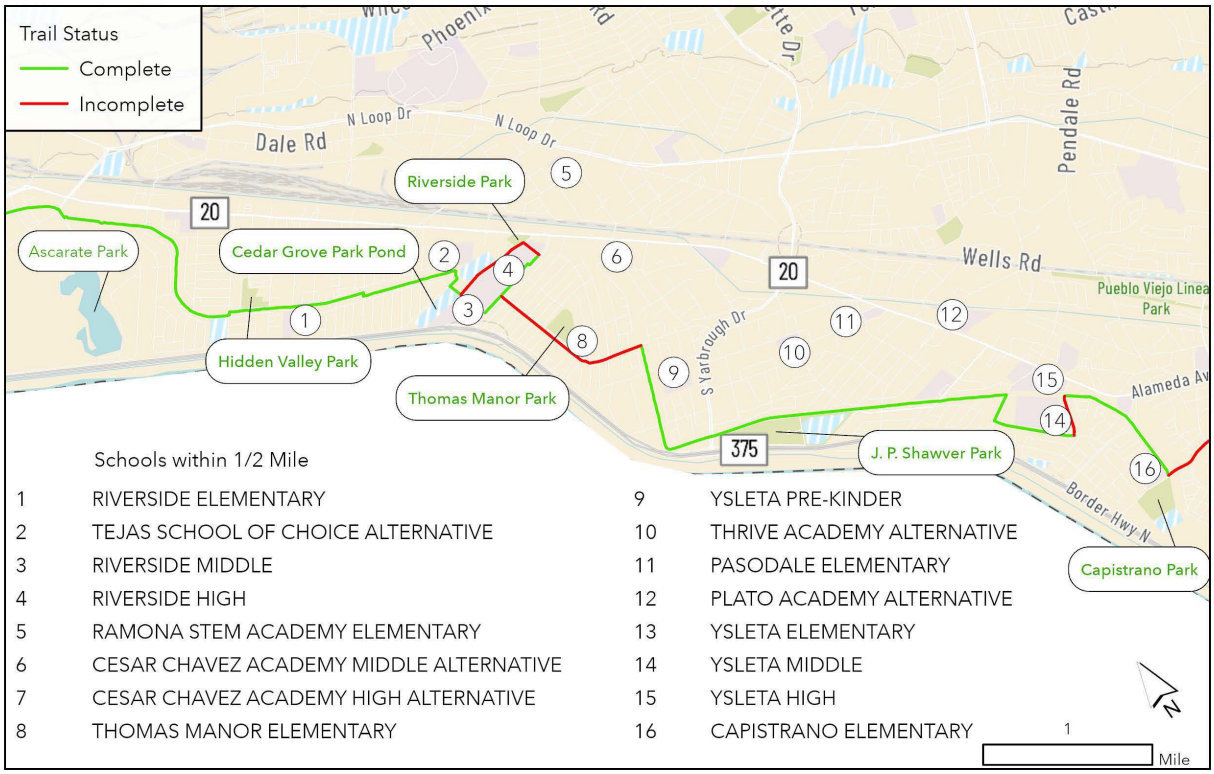
Background

The Health Foundation commissioned a master plan for the PdN Trail system in 2017. Completed in 2018, the plan considered demographic, economic, and health-related data to support investing in a trail system. The original alignment included five distinct districts and an international loop in Juarez. Since the completion of the Master Plan, the Health Foundation has led efforts to develop the PdN Trail alignment. The Trail Stakeholder Group has met regularly to identify funding opportunities for design and construction and report on progress and challenges. Maintaining communication with this group has facilitated the coordination of trail segment prioritization and funding requests. Consultants have assisted with these efforts since 2019. A list of Trail Stakeholder Group members is in Appendix A.

While the PdN Trail Master Plan was being developed, the Health Foundation also completed the construction of a 3.4-mile demonstration trail along the Playa Drain from Ascarate Park to Riverside Park. Embedded within neighborhoods along the Playa Drain, this trail segment provides residents with a safe, attractive facility for recreational and active transportation. The City of El Paso constructed additional segments, and the Playa Drain Trail now spans over 8 miles.

The Playa Drain Trail trailhead at Ascarate Park. The trail includes amenities, landscaping, and lighting.

The Playa Drain Trail provides a safe, attractive facility for walking and biking in El Paso's Lower Valley.



The Playa Drain Trail connects four parks and 15 schools across 8 miles in the Lower Valley.

The PdN Trail Master Plan included recommendations for trail development and the establishment of a trail corporation. The PdN Trail Foundation, housed at the Paso del Norte Community Foundation, provides the opportunity to establish a Friends of the Trail program to raise funds for amenities, landscaping, and fund trail events. Beginning in 2024, the Health Foundation retained consultants to help build a Friends of the Trail program.

As of 2025, 21 miles of the PdN Trail are complete. The City of El Paso, El Paso County, City of Socorro, Texas Department of Transportation, and City of Sunland Park secured over $75M for the design and construction of 31 miles. Most of these funded trail segments are in design and scheduled for construction within the next five years.

Literature Review

The following literature review uses the terms "trail network" and "trail system" generically. Within this plan, these concepts refer to the PdN Trail system.

Physical Activity

Physical activity, including walking, cycling, and everyday movement, is one of the most effective and well-documented ways to prevent chronic disease, improve mental health, and extend life expectancy. The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* consolidate extensive evidence that moderate-to-vigorous activity reduces risks for early mortality, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, several cancers, depression, and falls, while emphasizing that even modest increases in activity confer measurable benefits across ages and abilities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) translates this evidence into accessible public communication, summarizing both immediate and long-term benefits of physical activity for heart health, weight management, cognition, and mental well-being (CDC, n.d.). Complementing this, the World Health Organization's global guidelines confirm that any amount of movement yields health benefits and that reducing sedentary behavior is critical to disease prevention for children, adults, older adults, and people with chronic conditions or disabilities (World Health Organization, 2020).

Physical activity reduces the incidence of chronic diseases and improves mental health across diverse populations. Meta-analyses of device-measured and self-reported behavior show strong, curvilinear associations between total physical activity and reduced all-cause mortality, with even light-intensity movement providing significant protection compared against inactivity (Ekelund et al., 2019). Another large meta-analysis finds that higher volumes of moderate-intensity activity can offset the mortality risks associated with prolonged sitting, with benefits increasing non-linearly as activity volume rises (Ekelund et al., 2016).

Studies focusing on specific conditions underscore the breadth of health benefits. A systematic review of cohort studies shows that about 75 minutes per week of brisk walking is associated with a nearly 20 percent reduction in the risk of developing depression, with additional benefits at higher doses (Pearce et al., 2022). Similarly, regular physical activity is associated with significantly lower risk of developing anxiety symptoms or disorders, even after adjusting for lifestyle and demographic factors (McDowell, Dishman, Gordon, & Herring, 2019).

For individuals with diabetes, a key concern in the Paso del Norte region, greater physical activity is associated with lower risks of cardiovascular and microvascular complications and mortality, with benefits increasing in a dose-responsive manner (Zhang, Zhao, Wang, & Li, 2022). Another meta-analysis demonstrates that both moderate and vigorous activity, including

walking and resistance training, substantially reduces the incidence of type 2 diabetes, with the greatest gains when individuals move from low to moderate activity levels (Wahid et al., 2016). At the community scale, cross-sectional analyses show that places with higher shares of walking and cycling tend to exhibit lower obesity and diabetes rates and identify supportive policies and infrastructure characteristics associated with these outcomes (Pucher, Buehler, Bassett, & Dannenberg, 2010).

The Built Environment

National and international guidelines, epidemiological research, and planning frameworks converge on the conclusion that built environments such as parks, trails, and connected streets make regular movement attainable for more people and should be treated as essential public health infrastructure rather than optional amenities.

The CDC explicitly links "activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations" with higher physical activity rates, positioning built-environment design as a key lever for public health improvement (CDC, 2023–2025). The CDC's Active People, Healthy Nation materials on parks, recreation, and green spaces further highlight that proximity and perceived safety are among the strongest predictors of park and trail use, offering practical resources for agencies seeking to increase physical activity through equitable, safe, high-quality facilities (CDC, 2025).

Built-environment approaches focus on designing communities so that walking, cycling, and active transportation are safe, convenient, and appealing. The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends combined built-environment strategies—pairing transportation system interventions (e.g., sidewalks, bike facilities) with land-use and design changes (e.g., mixed use, increased density)—based on sufficient evidence that such combinations increase physical activity at the population level (Community Preventive Services Task Force, 2016). The U.S. Surgeon General's *Step It Up!* call to action similarly highlights the need for safe, convenient places to walk and roll and for a culture that supports walking for all ages and abilities, organized around strategic, cross-sector goals (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2015).

International comparative studies reinforce the role of urban form in shaping physical activity. Across 14 cities worldwide, more walkable, denser, mixed-use neighborhoods with connected street networks are associated with higher accelerometer-measured physical activity, with consistent findings across diverse settings (Sallis et al., 2016). A related global planning framework proposes integrated city-planning indicators and interventions that align transport, land use, and health objectives to reduce car dependence and promote active modes (Giles-Corti et al., 2016). Longitudinal and natural-experiment evidence strengthens causal inference. A systematic review of longitudinal studies finds that improved accessibility, transit access, and new walking/cycling infrastructure are associated with increased overall and transport-related physical activity (Kärmeniemi et al., 2018). A meta-analysis of natural experiments concludes that new urban trail infrastructure generally increases active transportation and leisure physical activity, with larger effects for connected, accessible facilities (Fast et al., 2025). Reviews of

bikeway networks emphasize that network connectivity—not just isolated facilities—is critical to higher cycling levels and safe, low-stress routes (Buehler & Dill, 2016).

Natural experiments evaluating new walking and cycling routes show consistent increases in physical activity among nearby residents. The UK iConnect study found that new active-travel routes led to population-level increases in walking and cycling, especially among residents living closest to the infrastructure, with effects sustained over two years (Goodman, Sahlqvist, & Ogilvie, 2014).

Trail Use Factors

A meta-analysis of natural experiments concludes that new urban trail infrastructure generally increases active transportation and leisure physical activity, with larger effects for connected, accessible facilities (Fast et al., 2025). Reviews of bikeway networks emphasize that network connectivity—not just isolated facilities—is critical to higher cycling levels and safe, low-stress routes (Buehler & Dill, 2016).

Perceived and actual safety are central to trail use. Studies of greenways show no significant increase in property or violent crime after trail development, and in some cases, small declines, with maintenance, visibility, and community presence highlighted as important contributors to safety (Sorensen et al., 2012). Surveys of older adults on urban greenways identify lighting, surface condition, vegetation management, and nearby social activity as key determinants of perceived safety and use frequency (Yi et al., 2021).

Trail Governance and Programming

Successful trail systems depend on more than physical infrastructure; they require durable governance, partnerships, and funding. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's TrailNation™ Playbook compiles lessons from building interconnected trail networks across the United States, emphasizing governance structures, coalition-building, community engagement, and long-term maintenance (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2023). The National Park Service's (NPS) *Making Friends Manual* provides detailed guidance for forming and managing nonprofit "Friends" groups that support trail projects through fundraising, volunteer coordination, and long-term stewardship (National Park Service, 2008).

Further, NPS policies on cooperating associations outline best practices for agreements, fiscal accountability, and shared missions between public agencies and nonprofit partners, emphasizing trust-building and transparency (National Park Service, 2017). In addition, practice-oriented resources from the National Recreation and Park Association show that ambassador programs, volunteer patrols, and improved lighting can shift perceptions of safety and encourage trail use (National Recreation and Park Association, 2014).

Evidence suggests that sustained promotion and programming can complement infrastructure improvements and deliver the health benefits of trails. The *Move Your Way®* campaign provides a national, evidence-informed communications framework with bilingual materials and a

structured “Community Playbook” that emphasizes planning, implementation, and evaluation, including behavior-change metrics (U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2018–ongoing). Evaluation studies link exposure to the campaign with higher awareness of guidelines, greater self-efficacy, and higher reported activity levels (Quinn et al., 2022).

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Resource Library complements this with practice guides, case studies, and marketing resources that support equitable trail engagement and promotion (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.). Social marketing work shows that formative research, message testing, and barrier-focused strategies can increase walking and trail use (Khan et al., 2012).

Organized events and volunteer programs can activate underused trails and help build a “culture of use.” Guidance from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and American Trails describes how guided walks, rides, cleanups, and stewardship events increase participation and visibility, while ambassador programs support user education, etiquette, and safety (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, n.d.; American Trails, 2025).

Open Streets or Ciclovía-style events demonstrate that temporarily closing streets to cars and opening them to people can generate large volumes of moderate-to-vigorous activity and provide favorable cost metrics per participant (Hipp, Eyler, Zieff, & Samuelson, 2014; Ciclovía evaluation, 2016). These events also raise awareness of active transportation options and can be used to highlight trail connections.

On-trail signage and wayfinding function as low-cost behavior-change tools. Studies show that coherent, signposted routes with clear directional wayfinding and distance markers can increase path use over time, particularly when routes are legible and connected to amenities (Hunter et al., 2023). When such wayfinding improvements are combined with marketing campaigns, trail use increases relative to comparison sites (Brownson et al., 2014).

Economic Benefit of Trails

Economic analyses demonstrate that trail investments can yield substantial returns through tourism, local business activity, and improved quality of life. A research library from Headwaters Economics aggregates hundreds of studies that document the health, economic, and social benefits of trails and outdoor recreation, with a particular emphasis on long-term economic returns (Headwaters Economics, 2024). One example is the Great Allegheny Passage, which supports over $120 million in annual visitor spending and 1,400 jobs, illustrating how a continuous destination corridor can stimulate regional economies (Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy, 2019). Impact assessments from the East Coast Greenway show increased active commuting and measurable carbon-reduction benefits from completed segments (East Coast Greenway Alliance & NV5, 2019).

Evaluation

A growing body of guidance and research details methods for monitoring trail use and success. FHWA’s *Traffic Monitoring Guide* serves as the primary standard for traffic monitoring,

including a nonmotorized chapter that emphasizes program design, equipment, data quality, and seasonal adjustment (FHWA, 2022). NCHRP Report 797 further elaborates on technologies and program planning for pedestrian and bicycle data collection, including case studies (NCHRP, 2014).

Research on day-of-year scaling factors and sensor deployment demonstrates how to convert short-duration counts into normalized annual measures and select permanent counter locations, accounting for seasonality—important in highly seasonal desert climates such as El Paso's (Hankey & Lindsey, 2012). Additional agency reports from Minnesota DOT and Colorado DOT document sensor performance, calibration, and extrapolation methodologies applicable to trails (Minnesota DOT, 2015; Colorado DOT, 2013).

Observation and survey tools like SOPARC and the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project complement automated data by capturing user characteristics, activity intensity, and equity-relevant patterns (SOPARC protocols; NBPD materials). Emerging approaches using mobile devices and crowdsourced data, such as cellular location data and Strava Metro, offer expanded spatial coverage but require local calibration to correct for biases and demographic skew (PLOS ONE, 2023; Reinhardt et al., 2024; Lee & Sener, 2023).

Conclusion

Across guidelines, epidemiology, built-environment research, and practice guidance, the literature consistently shows that:

- Physical activity, even at light intensities and modest doses, substantially reduces risks of chronic disease, premature mortality, and poor mental health (Ekelund et al., 2016, 2019; Pearce et al., 2022; McDowell et al., 2019).
- Built environments that provide safe, connected, and comfortable walking and cycling infrastructure, including trails, reliably increase physical activity at the population level, especially when integrated with supportive land use and transit (Community Preventive Services Task Force, 2016; Sallis et al., 2016; Kärmeniemi et al., 2018; Goodman et al., 2014; Fast et al., 2025).
- Successful trail systems require governance, consistent design and maintenance standards, community engagement, and sustainable funding, and they generate measurable economic and social benefits (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2023; U.S. Forest Service, 2012; Headwaters Economics, 2024; Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy, 2019).
- Programs, campaigns, and health-care linkages complement infrastructure improvements, helping people discover, trust, and routinely use trail networks (U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2018–ongoing; Khan et al., 2012; Petrunoff et al., 2021; Kondo et al., 2020).

In the Paso del Norte region, where extreme heat, car-oriented design, and long commutes contribute to inactivity and sedentary behavior, the PdN Trail can simultaneously serve as health infrastructure and a transportation network. By planning for shade and comfort,

connecting to everyday destinations, building strong governance and community partnerships, pairing infrastructure with targeted promotion, and implementing robust monitoring, PdN partners can leverage trails as a practical strategy to improve health and quality of life across the border region.

Trail System Management Benchmarking

As discussed in the literature review, successful trail systems require robust governance, consistent design and maintenance standards, community engagement, and sustained funding. The following examples highlight different governance and management models used by established trail systems and offer lessons relevant to the long-term sustainability of the PdN Trail. With the exception of the Circuit Trails, the trails in the table run through publicly owned land. The Circuit Trails include segments on private land through public-access easements.

Trail System Management Benchmarking: Comparison Table

Trail System	Location & Scale	Lead / Coordinating Entity(ies)	Role of Nonprofit Partner	Maintenance Model	Key Takeaway for PdN Trail
Caracara Trails	Lower Rio Grande Valley, TX. More than 420 miles planned.	Multi-sector partnership including Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, UT School of Public Health, regional MPO	Supports coordination, vision-setting, and regional collaboration	Local jurisdictions maintain trail segments.	Large regional systems benefit from shared vision and coordination, even when maintenance remains decentralized.
Katy Trail	Dallas, TX. ~3.5 miles	Friends of the Katy Trail and City of Dallas	Operates and maintains the trail; raises funds for amenities, security, and programming	Nonprofit is solely responsible for maintenance and enhancement efforts	A strong Friends group can elevate trail quality, safety, and amenities beyond basic public maintenance.
Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail	Austin, TX ~10 miles urban loop	The Trail Conservancy	Fundraises for, maintains, and programs the trail and	Nonprofit is solely responsible for operations, maintenance, and	Long-term nonprofit stewardship can sustain major capital investments and high

			adjacent parkland	programming through an agreement with the city	levels of public use.
The Circuit Trails	Greater Philadelphia & New Jersey 860 miles planned; 400+ complete	William Penn Foundation and Circuit Trails Coalition	Coordinates coalition, funds construction and programming	Maintained by local jurisdictions with additional funding from the William Penn Foundation.	A backbone funder and coalition model accelerates regional trail completion, maintenance, and programming.

Key lessons for the PdN Trail system:

- Dedicated nonprofit partners strengthen fundraising and programming.
- Nonprofit partners also strengthen branding and trail visibility and contribute to trail long-term maintenance and sustainability.
- Regional trail systems benefit from a coordinating backbone organization.

Together, these examples demonstrate that long-term trail success depends not only on building infrastructure but on investing in organizational capacity, community engagement, and ongoing management. These lessons directly inform the PdN Trail strategy to establish Friends of the Trail organization, clarify governance roles, and plan for long-term sustainability as the PdN Trail system expands.

Looking forward to the 2026-30 Strategic Plan

Over the next five years, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation will advance the PdN Trail system through a coordinated set of strategies designed to increase access to safe, connected places for physical activity and to ensure that trail investments translate into sustained community use and long-term health benefits. The Trail Stakeholder Group, Trail Technical Workgroup, and trail consultants will provide advice and assist in advancing the 2026- 2030 goals outlined below.

Complete a connected PdN Trail spine

- Build consensus on unfunded trail alignments to close remaining gaps through Trail Stakeholder and Technical Workgroup engagement.
- Position projects for funding by advancing design and engineering.
- Pursue established and emerging funding sources, including TXDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program and Metropolitan Planning Organization opportunities.
- Deploy Health Foundation resources to strategically accelerate trail completion.

Establish a Friends of the Trail organization

- Establish and fund an organization to steward and activate the trail.
- Build long-term fundraising capacity to support amenities and programming.
- Grow volunteer engagement and community ownership of the trail.
- Align fundraising and programming with trail development priorities.

Ensure safe, high-quality trail user experiences through long-term sustainability

- Establish a sustainable approach to maintaining a growing, multi-jurisdictional trail.
- Create a recognizable, unified identity for the trail.
- Strengthen community stewardship and shared responsibility for trail quality.

Expand PdN Trail System beyond the spine

- Expand access to the trail from neighborhoods and daily destinations.
- Prioritize connections in areas with limited walking and biking infrastructure.
- Support trail development along utility easements and other high-potential corridors.

Evaluating the Initiative

Because infrastructure and community engagement are drivers of health, indicators on progress toward access, use, and system sustainability, rather than direct health outcomes, will be used to evaluate progress. Through consistent communication with trail stakeholders and workgroups, Health Foundation staff will monitor the progress of trail development efforts and the Friends of the Trail program. The following indicators will be tracked.

<u>Complete the Paso del Norte (PdN) Trail Spine</u>

Process / Output Indicators

- Number of unfunded trail segments with finalized alignments
- Amount of funding secured for PdN Trail spine segments
- Miles of trail designed and constructed

<u>Establish a Friends of the Trail Organization</u>

Process / Output Indicators

- Annual fundraising dollars secured
- Number of grants submitted and awarded for amenities or programming
- Number of volunteer events, clean-ups, and tree plantings conducted

<u>Use / Engagement Indicators</u>

- Trail use and user satisfaction
- Attendance at trail events and programs
- Growth in social media reach and website engagement
- Number of active volunteers and volunteer hours contributed

<u>Plan for Long-Term Maintenance, Branding, and Sustainability</u>

Process / Output Indicators

- Completion of a long-term maintenance plan
- Adoption of branding, naming, and wayfinding standards
- Number of jurisdictions participating in coordinated maintenance planning
- Installation of consistent wayfinding and signage along priority segments

Advance Trail Connections, Loops, and Spurs Beyond the Trail Spine

Process / Output Indicators

- Number of priority connections, loops, or spurs identified
- Number of connection projects planned, designed, or funded
- Amount of funding secured for neighborhood connections

Reference

American Trails. (2025). Counting trail users. American Trails Resource Library. https://www.americantrails.org/resources/counting-trail-users

American Trails & Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. (2025). Designing events that engage your community. https://www.americantrails.org/training/designing-events-that-engage-your-community

Ajufo, E., Khurshid, S., et al. (2024). Accelerometer-measured sedentary behavior and risk of future cardiovascular disease. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0735109724099200

Biswas, A., Oh, P. I., Faulkner, G. E., Bajaj, R. R., Silver, M. A., Mitchell, M. S., & Alter, D. A. (2015). Sedentary time and its association with risk for disease incidence, mortality, and hospitalization in adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 162(2), 123–132.

Brownson, R. C., et al. (2014). The effect of a trail use intervention in Southern Nevada. *Preventive Medicine*.

Buehler, R., & Dill, J. (2016). Bikeway networks: A review of effects on cycling. Transport Reviews, 36(1), 9–27.

Cao, Y., et al. (2019). Trends in sedentary behavior among the US population, 2001–2016. *JAMA*, 321(16), 1587–1597.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Benefits of physical activity. https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/benefits/index.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023–2025). Active People, Healthy Nation—Data and research. https://www.cdc.gov/active-people-healthy-nation/php/data-research/index.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025). Community design examples for increasing physical activity. https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/community-design-examples/index.html

Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2016). Physical activity: Built environment approaches. https://www.thecommunityguide.org

Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2024). Parks, trails, and greenways for physical activity: Systematic economic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 67 (1), 1–14.

Ekelund, U., Steene-Johannessen, J., Brown, W. J., et al. (2016). Does physical activity attenuate, or even eliminate, the detrimental association of sitting time with mortality? *The Lancet*, 388 (10051), 1302–1310.

Ekelund, U., Tarp, J., Steene-Johannessen, J., et al. (2019). Dose-response associations between accelerometer-measured physical activity and all-cause mortality. *BMJ*, 366, l4570.

Federal Highway Administration. (2022). Traffic monitoring guide. https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/74643

Headwaters Economics. (2024). Trails research and benefits library. https://headwaterseconomics.org/trail/

Pearce, M., Garcia, L., Abbas, A., et al. (2022). Physical activity and risk of depression. JAMA *Psychiatry*, 79(6), 550–559.

Remme, R. P., Frumkin, H., Guerry, A. D., et al. (2021). An ecosystem service perspective on urban nature, physical activity, and health. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(46), e2018472118.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). Physical activity guidelines for Americans (2nd ed.). https://health.gov

World Health Organization. (2020). WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour. https://www.who.int

Appendix A

PdN Trail Stakeholder Group

Name	Title	Organization
Mario Juarez-Infante	City Manager	City of Sunland Park
Alejandra Valadez	City Development Director	City of Socorro
Raymond Telles	Executive Director	Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority
Eduardo Calvo	Executive Director	El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
Omar Martinez	Assistant Director, Economic Development Department	City of El Paso
Robert Read	Director of Planning and Development	El Paso County
Joaquin Rodriguez	Director, Grant Funded Programs	City of El Paso
Tim Fulton	Interim Director, Parks and Recreation Department	El Paso County

PdN Trail Technical Workgroup

Name	Title	Organization
Jose Bocanegra	City Manager	TXDOT
Tim Fulton	Interim Director, Parks and Recreation Department	El Paso County
Harrison Plourde	Assistant Director	El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
Robert Studer	Director of Finance	Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority
Jorge Castillo	Open Space, Trails, and Parks Coordinator	City of El Paso
Ismael Cepeda	Capital Projects Manager	City of El Paso
Ana Zendt	Transportation Planning Administrator	City of El Paso
Lorine Quimiro	City Planner	City of Socorro
Daniel Bueno	Community and Economic Development Coordinator	Village of Vinton
Hector Rangel	Public Works Director	City of Sunland Park

Appendix B

PdN Trail Unfunded Trail Segments

Paso del Norte Traiil Segment	Location	Incomplete (Miles)	Jurisdiction
Rio Grande Trail	Rio Grande Trail: Country Club Road to Racetrack	4.65	City of Sunland Park, IBWC
Loop 375/UTEP/Downtown	Executive to UTEP	1.23	TxDOT, UTEP, City of El Paso
Loop 375/UTEP/Downtown	UTEP to Interstate 10	2.59	TxDOT, UTEP, City of El Paso
Franklin Canal Trail	Alameda Roundabout to Playa Drain	2.43	EPCWID1, TxDOT, City of El Paso
Mission Trail	Alameda Ave from Buford Rd/Horizon Blvd to San Elizario Rd	7.88	TxDOT, El Paso County
Mission Trail	Alameda Ave from San Elizario Rd to Fabens	8.14	TxDOT, El Paso County
	Total Miles	**26.92**	