

2015 RAIL-TRAIL HALL OF FAME

## Symbolic Legacy

It's only fitting that Pennsylvania's Heritage Rail Trail County Park and Maryland's Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail unite at the Mason-Dixon Line, perfectly representing the history of a rail corridor steeped in the conflicts of the Civil War, and joining in plans for an exciting future. It's equally fitting that in 2015, the 150th anniversary of the Civil War's conclusion and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, they share the honor of being placed in the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) Rail-Trail Hall of Fame.

"These are outstanding examples of iconic rail-trails that had yet to be recognized," says Liz Thorstensen, RTC's vice president of trail development. "They are both really well utilized and seen as important assets in their communities."

Together, the stewards of these outstanding trails have perfectly balanced the job of remembering their history and providing for their present and future communities.

The former Northern Central Railway provides the footprint for the



The Heritage Rail Trail celebrates its railroad past with Steam Into History.

JOHN GENSOR

rail-trails, now spanning nearly 44 miles of crushed stone. In the early 1800s, the railroad carried passengers and freight between Baltimore and York, Pennsylvania. Confederate troops attacked the critical rail line in the summers of 1863 and 1864, destroying bridges that soon were rebuilt by Union

forces. After the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, thousands of wounded soldiers used the railway to evacuate to hospitals. President Lincoln traveled on the line in November 1863 to deliver his now-famous Gettysburg Address. Following Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, just days after the end of the war, the Northern Central Railway transported his remains from Baltimore to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a section of the funeral train procession from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois.

The railroad changed ownership several times but remained operational until 1972, when Hurricane Agnes severely damaged miles of track. By 1984, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources had converted the Maryland portion into the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, also known as the Northern Central Railroad Trail. Pennsylvania opened the first portion of the connecting Heritage Rail Trail in 1999, and additional portions along the northern end have been opening in stages since 2007. The last 2 miles of trail needed to connect the main trail and its northern extension are on schedule to be completed in 2016.

"The Torrey C. Brown trail now attracts nearly a million user visits annually, [and] based upon the most recent study, the Heritage Rail Trail attracts nearly 300,000 annual user visits," says Carl Knoch, former trail development manager for RTC's Northeast Regional Office and chairman of the York County Rail Trail Authority ([yorkcountyrails.org](http://yorkcountyrails.org)) board of directors. "The trail has been an economic boon to the small towns along the route, with new businesses forming to serve trail users and existing businesses seeing increased traffic."

The Heritage Rail Trail also celebrates its history and draws tourism with Steam Into History, 10-mile excursion train rides alongside the trail powered by a replica 1860s steam locomotive.

Together, the two trails compose a central portion of the developing Grand History Trail, which will link more 250

miles of trail and explore more than 250 years of American history between Washington, D.C., and Gettysburg. —Danielle Taylor

## Midwest Masterpiece

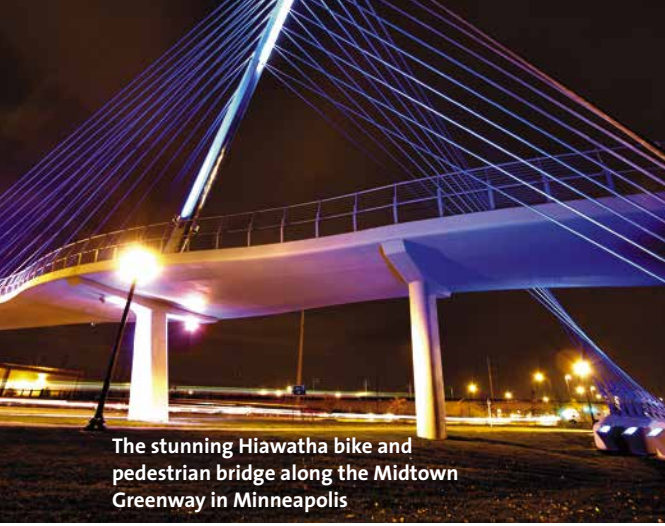
Minneapolis clearly is doing something right. A 2014 study by the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that the city boasted a bicycle commuter rate nearly seven times the national average.

Much of this success can be attributed to the Midtown Greenway, a 5.5-mile rail-trail running east to west through south Minneapolis. Each day, thousands of commuters hit the trail, helping the city reduce fuel emissions and promote a culture of physical activity. Because the trail has very few intersections with other thoroughfares, it offers the fastest option for traveling crosstown. Additionally, the trail has spurred development along its route, generating new income streams for Minneapolis and its residents.

Recognizing the positive impact this trail has had on its community and seeing it as a noteworthy example for other cities to follow, RTC chose to highlight the Midtown Greenway in 2015 by inducting it into the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame.

"It is one of the most popular bike commuter routes in the city, and one of the busiest bikeways in the state," says Soren Jensen, executive director of the Midtown Greenway Coalition. "More than 5,000 people bike on it each day during the summer months, and we estimate more than 1 million bike trips are taken on it each year."

A 1912 directive from the Minneapolis City Council mandated that all rail lines running through the city had to be laid below street level to reduce collisions with other vehicles and pedestrians, so the Milwaukee Railroad dug a trench to accommodate its rail line. Eighty years later, the below-grade, uninterrupted corridor caught the eye of a few local bike advocates. The Midtown



The stunning Hiawatha bike and pedestrian bridge along the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis

TONY WEBSTER

Greenway Coalition (**midtowngreenway.org**) was first organized in 1992 as a collection of like-minded volunteers. After nearly a decade of property negotiations, organizational changes and governmental interventions, phase one of the rail-trail opened in August 2000.

“The Midtown Greenway is the crown jewel of rail-trails,” states Marianne Wesley Fowler, senior strategist for policy advocacy at RTC. “It’s integral to the city’s transportation pattern. The trail’s incredible usage anchors that whole system.”

The trail is so popular among commuters, Jensen says, that it even has a rush hour in the afternoon. Because it is plowed in the winter and lighted at night, it’s used at all hours and in all seasons.

“[The Midtown Greenway] has truly forged the way for [Minneapolis] to become one of the lead communities in America for walking and biking,” Fowler says.

—Danielle Taylor

#### 2015 RAIL-TRAIL CHAMPION

## In Memory of Rail-Trail Champion Deb Hubsmith

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy was deeply saddened by the passing of friend and colleague Deb Hubsmith on Aug. 18, 2015, after a two-year battle with acute myeloid leukemia. She was 46.

Deb was a passionate and gifted champion for many of the advances the nation has seen in trails and bike/ped policy and practice over the past 20 years.

As a leader of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition in California, which she helped found in 1998, Deb worked with the late Minnesota Congressman

Jim Oberstar and other advocates to craft a legislative agenda to advance walking and biking nationwide. Building on federal transportation legislation, she helped define several programs that would carry the bike/ped movement beyond the individual project stage to one advocating safe active-transportation systems around the country for people of all ages and abilities.

In 2000, Deb worked tirelessly on implementation of the Safe Routes to School Pilot Program in Marin County, one of two participating sites. It incorporated the Mill Valley-Sausalito Path—one of the nation’s pioneering rail-trails—into its plan. Deb’s dream to ensure a fully funded national program would be advanced in 2005 with passage of a Safe Routes to School Program in Congress’ SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation.

She also was vital in securing the ratification that same year of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP), for which Marin County served as one of four test communities in the United States. Additionally, she helped form the NTPP working group charged with guiding the initiative to completion.

Marin County NTPP efforts included restoration of the 1,100-foot Cal Park Hill Tunnel as the lead project, closing a regional network gap between San Rafael and Larkspur and providing expanded access to the San Francisco Bay Ferry. Opened in 2010, the Cal Park Hill Tunnel stands as a national model for how the recycling of old rail facilities and application of innovative designs can help reconnect America’s communities. NTPP would be responsible for averting 85.1 million vehicle miles traveled as opposed to biking or walking between 2009 and 2013.

Deb’s persistence and efforts helped lead to the founding in 2005 of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, for which she served for many years as executive director. Safe Routes to School

programs now operate in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

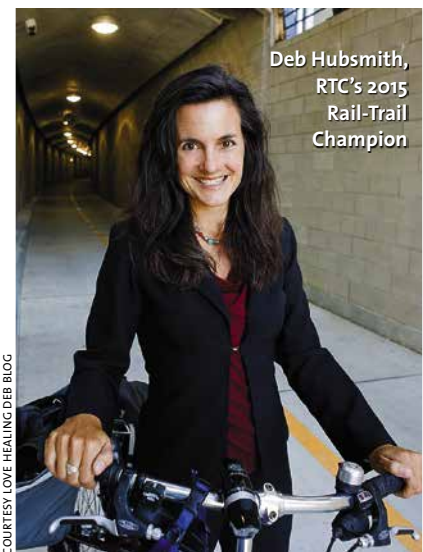
“Deb was a friend and tireless advocate who never relented in her drive to make Marin County and all of America a healthier place,” said RTC President Keith Laughlin. “While she departed this earth far too young, she leaves a legacy that most humans could not hope to achieve in 100 years.”

In honor and gratitude for her passion and accomplishments, RTC named Deb its 2015 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion, a designation that places her among a special group of visionaries who’ve made remarkable contributions to rail-trails. RTC notified Deb of this designation shortly before she passed away in August. A set of benches located above San Francisco Bay, south of the Cal Park Hill Tunnel, bears an inscription honoring Deb’s memory and her selection as Rail-Trail Champion.

“There are few for whom it can be claimed that they were necessary to the advocacy efforts that brought walking and biking to the fore in American communities,” said Marianne Wesley Fowler, RTC’s senior strategist for policy advocacy and a longtime friend and colleague of Deb’s.

“Deb stands among them, and she will be missed.”

—Amy Kapp



Deb Hubsmith, RTC's 2015 Rail-Trail Champion

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