

How Local Governments and Non-Profits Can Partner Together For Trails

Overview of “Friends of the Trail” Non-Profit Organizations

The Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) region has a history of using a utilitarian approach with public funds to provide the basic framework for the active transportation network. “Friends of the Trail” organizations support local governments in a grassroots approach to fund and maintain enhancements along new and existing trail infrastructure including landscaping, lighting, and other user amenities.

Local non-profit Friends of the Trail organizations have various roles in communities. They promote and enhance bicycling, educate residents about walking and bicycling safety, organize community support for the trails and promote the image of a bike-friendly city. Typically local governments own the trail infrastructure and the land on which the trails are located. Municipalities may have agreements with non-profit Friends of the Trail organizations to express the responsibilities of both parties.

Typically the Friends of the Trail groups coordinate fundraising activities through campaigns, annual and seasonal events, and donations for trail enhancements. Funding campaigns may include trail run and walk fundraisers, member socials, private donations, corporate sponsorships and donations of amenities such as brick pavers and water fountains. Many Friends of the Trail organizations have their own website or blogs to provide the latest news about trails, upcoming events, and many other useful resources so residents can be connected and involved.

Non-Profit “Friends of the Trail” Organization and Interacting with the City

Local governments coordinate with non-profit organizations in various ways, including partnerships to plan, construct, and maintain improvements of trail amenities. Friends of the Trail groups may form 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organizations with a specific purpose to raise funds for capital improvements, programs and operations related to the trail and generally supporting and enhancing the trail. Friends of the Trail organizations may oversee the cultural and safety improvements including but not limited to landscaping, lighting, mile markers, bike racks, benches, trail heads, and public art.

The Non-Profit organizations typically have a board of directors who act as officers of the organization, to coordinate and carry out the board’s decisions. The organizations may also have administrative staff members who are paid for their services, in addition to a network of non-paid volunteers who assist the staff members in completing tasks for the organization.

In addition to the Friends of the Trail organizations, there are other 501(c)(3) non-profit advocacy organizations that promote bicycling for transportation and recreation throughout North Texas and the State of Texas. The Friends of the Trail organizations differ from the regional and state advocacy groups in that their role and mission is focused expressly on a specific trail, or network of trails, in the community.

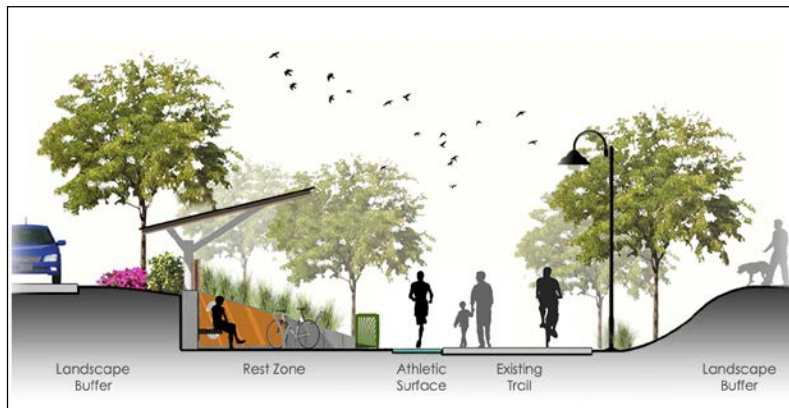
Examples of Non-Profit Organizations in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region

There are numerous examples of non-profit Friends of the Trail organizations in the DFW region including the following:

- Friends of Katy Trail <http://www.katytraildallas.org>
- Friends of Santa Fe Trail <http://friendsofsantafetrail.org>
- Friends of Preston Ridge Trail <http://www.prestonridgetrail.org>
- Friends of Northaven Trail <http://northaventrail.org>
- Trinity Strand Trail <http://www.trinitystrand.org>
- Friends of White Rock Trail <http://whiterocktrail.org>
- Streams & Valleys, Inc. <http://www.streamsandvalleys.org>



The Katy Trail in Dallas is an example of the DFW region's utilitarian approach to constructing active transportation facilities. The Friends of Katy Trail provide enhancements and help maintain the basic infrastructure constructed with public funds.



The Friends of Santa Fe Trail prepared a master plan to serve as an example of how an entire length of trail might ultimately develop. The Friends group uses the master plan to guide investment along the trail and a tool to assist with fundraising efforts.



<http://www.nctcog.org/trans/sustdev/bikeped/bikeweb/>