

HARNESSING
THE HERD:
TRAILS AS
CATALYST FOR
HEALTH AND
WELLBEING



Big Land. Bold
Partnerships.
Smart Funding for
Outdoor
Investments.

Big Land. Bold Partnerships. Smart Funding for Outdoor Investments.

Local programs

According to the ATAC bylaws, the committee advises the KTMPO Transportation Planning Policy Board (TPPB) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on the planning and development of infrastructure, policies, and strategies that prioritize and encourage active transportation across the region. This includes, but is not limited to biking, walking, paddle craft, and equestrian activities. ATAC also ensures that non-motorized and low-speed electric travel modes are effectively integrated into broader transportation strategies, supporting a multimodal network that serves people of all ages and abilities.

One of the key ways the committee fulfills this role is by promoting public interest and awareness of active transportation and outdoor mobility planning throughout the KTMPO area and beyond including bicycling, walking, equestrian travel, paddlecraft, and other non-motorized ways people move through outdoor spaces. ATAC collaborates closely with local clubs, community organizations, and partner agencies, like municipalities and regularly participates in regional events such as National Bike Month, National Trails Day and National Pedestrian Safety Month, to elevate the profile of active transportation and encourage safer mobility choices.

The 2026 Stakeholder Engagement Schedule reflects ATAC's year-long commitment to outreach, education, and regional collaboration. Through events such as Ride a Bike Day, The Ride of Silence, National Trails Day, and Pedestrian Safety Month, ATAC and its partners help cultivate a culture of active mobility while strengthening relationships among local jurisdictions, advocacy groups, and community members. These activities not only raise awareness of active transportation but also reinforce its integration into regional planning efforts—supporting safer, more connected, and more vibrant communities across the KTMPO region.

Trails and active transportation investments are most effective when reinforced by strong community alignment, clear policy direction, and consistent public engagement. KTMPO has demonstrated this commitment through a series of past signed resolutions and proclamations supporting active transportation, including, National Bike Month (Figure 3.1), Texas Trails Day (Figure 3.2), and Pedestrian Safety Month (Figure 3.3). Building on this foundation, KTMPO is preparing a resolution establishing *Unplug Texas Day* in October 2026, encouraging communities to step outside, explore local trails and parks, and experience outdoor mobility without relying on motorized travel. These resolutions will continue to elevate health, safety, and mobility as shared regional priorities. In addition, these coordinated initiatives create predictable, recurring opportunities to align planning, education, and infrastructure investments with real-world



RESOLUTION NO. 2025-08

**A RESOLUTION OF THE KILLEEN-TEMPLE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
SUPPORTING NATIONAL BIKE MONTH (MAY 2025) AND ASSOCIATED EVENTS**

WHEREAS; National Bike Month is celebrated annually to encourage and promote cycling as a healthy, sustainable, and environmentally friendly mode of transportation; and

WHEREAS; bicycle commuting is an effective means to reduce air pollution caused by vehicular emissions, conserve energy, and promotes the “livability” of communities by reducing traffic, noise, and congestion in Central Texas; and

WHEREAS; bicycle transportation is an integral part of the “multi-modal” transportation system planned by federal, state, regional, and local transportation agencies; and

WHEREAS; The League of American Bicyclists has declared the month of May 2025, as National Bike Month; May 4, 2025 as Ride a Bike Day; May 12 - May 18, 2025 as Bike to Work Week; and May 16, 2025 as Bike to Work Day; and May 21, 2025 as Annual Ride of Silence Event; and

WHEREAS; the UNC Highway Safety Research Center has promoted Walk Bike & Roll to School Day since 2012. The 2025 Walk Bike & Roll to School Day will occur on May 7, 2025; and

WHEREAS; the Safe Kids Mid-Texas and McLane Children’s Baylor Scott & White Medical Center hosts the Annual Safe Kids Day and Bike Rodeo on May 3, 2025, from 10 am – 1pm; and

WHEREAS; the Ride of Silence is an annual event dedicated to honoring and remembering cyclists who have been injured or killed while riding on public roadways. Promoting awareness of traffic safety and advocating for safer roadways for cyclists, pedestrians, and all individuals is a shared responsibility. The Ride of Silence provides an opportunity for communities to raise awareness about cyclist safety and the importance of sharing the road with all users. The City of Nolanville will host the 2025 Ride of Silence on May 21, 2025, from 6:30-8pm; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization hereby recognizes the month of May 2025, as National Bike Month; May 4, 2025, as Ride a Bike Day; May 12 - May 18, 2025, as Bike to Work



Week; and May 16, 2025, as Bike to Work Day; May 21, 2025, as Annual Ride of Silence Event; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization urges all who support bicycling to participate in the events planned as deemed appropriate in accordance with city and county orders and urges all road users to share the road safely with bicyclists.

PASSED AND ADOPTED on this 16th day of April 2025, at a regular meeting of the KTMPO Policy Board meeting which was held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, 551.001, *et seq.*, and at which meeting a quorum was present and voting.

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Long", written over a horizontal line.

Councilmember Susan Long,
KTMPO TPPB Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Uryan Nelson", written over a horizontal line.

Uryan Nelson, KTMPO Director



RESOLUTION NO. 2025-09

**A RESOLUTION OF THE KILLEEN-TEMPLE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
SUPPORTING THE FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE AS THE NATIONAL TRAILS DAY**

- WHEREAS;** The American Hiking Society has declared Saturday, June 7, 2025 as National Trails Day; and
- WHEREAS;** Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization celebrates trails and encourages outdoor activities that strengthen community ties through trail clean-ups, biking, walking, paddle crafts, and horseback riding; and
- WHEREAS;** contribute to the region by enhancing connectivity and promoting regional tourism; and
- WHEREAS;** recognizes that trails promote active lifestyles, recreation, and an opportunity to experience nature; and
- WHEREAS;** the benefits trails contribute to the overall social and physical well-being of our community and the natural environment; and
- WHEREAS;** supports the stewardship of existing trail infrastructure by encouraging a variety of outdoor activities, while promoting safety: Sun Country Cycling will lead a Beginner Mountain Bike Ride at Dana Peak Park at 7 a.m.; Tablerock Amphitheater will host a Trail Cleanup at the Amphitheater Trails in Salado at 8 a.m.; the City of Copperas Cove and the Copperas Cove Chamber of Commerce will hold a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the opening of trails at Ogletree Gap Preserves at 9 a.m.; and Barrow Brewing Co. will host SUP Salado Paddle Board on Salado Creek at 6 p.m.; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning hereby recognizes Saturday, June 7, 2025, as National Trails Day; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization supports the stewardship of existing trail infrastructure, the integration of trails and active transportation into daily life, the enhancement of regional connectivity for the future, and recognizes the economic benefits of tourism driven by active transportation and outdoor recreation; and

PASSED AND ADOPTED on this 21st day of May 2025 at a regular meeting of the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Planning Policy



Board, which meeting was held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, 511.001, *et seq.*, at which meeting a quorum was present and voting.

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bobby Whitson', written over a horizontal line.

Commissioner Bobby Whitson,
KTMPO TPPB Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Uryan Nelson', written over a horizontal line.

Uryan Nelson, KTMPO Director



RESOLUTION NO. 2025-11

**A RESOLUTION OF THE KILLEEN-TEMPLE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
DECLARING OCTOBER 2025 AS NATIONAL PEDESTRIAN SAFETY MONTH**

- WHEREAS;** the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has designated October 2025 as National Pedestrian Safety Month; and
- WHEREAS;** October 2025 is also recognized as International Walk to School Month, with October 8, 2025, designated as National Walk and Roll to School Day; and
- WHEREAS;** these designations emphasize the critical importance of protecting our most vulnerable road users by encouraging safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly forms of active transportation; and
- WHEREAS;** between 2020 and 2023, there were 39 fatal crashes and 88 serious injury crashes involving pedestrians reported in the KTMPO region. That means 127 people—our neighbors, family members, and friends—were killed or seriously injured simply while walking in our communities. This unacceptable toll demands immediate attention; and
- WHEREAS;** National Pedestrian Safety Month and International Walk to School Month highlight the urgent need for safer roads, lower vehicle speeds, safer vehicles, more effective post-crash care, and improved infrastructure to reduce injuries and fatalities among pedestrians; and
- WHEREAS;** the availability of safe, accessible, and well-maintained pedestrian infrastructure, including trails, sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and traffic calming measures, is essential for reducing crashes involving pedestrians and promoting more active transportation in our communities; and
- WHEREAS;** pedestrian safety is a shared responsibility that requires the commitment of all road users and policymakers to ensure our streets are safe for everyone; and
- WHEREAS;** the promotion of pedestrian safety education—especially in schools—is vital to fostering safe habits among children and youth, empowering the next generation to navigate streets safely and to become advocates for safer, more walkable communities; and



WHEREAS; KTMPO is committed to supporting and promoting these educational initiatives in collaboration with local jurisdictions, school systems, and community partners; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization hereby declares October 2025 as National Pedestrian Safety Month in the KTMPO region.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization supports efforts to improve pedestrian infrastructure and encourages all road users to be vigilant, obey traffic laws, and actively work to create a safer environment for pedestrians.

PASSED AND ADOPTED on this 10th day of September 2025 at a regular meeting of the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Planning Policy Board, which meeting was held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, 511.001, *et seq.*, at which meeting a quorum was present and voting.

ATTEST:

A blue ink signature of Bobby Whitson, written over a horizontal line.

Bobby Whitson, KTMPO TPPB Chair
Bell County Commissioner

A blue ink signature of Uryan Nelson, written over a horizontal line.

Uryan Nelson, KTMPO Director
Planning and Regional Services Division Director
Central Texas Council of Governments

outcomes, such as safer walking and biking, reduced fatalities, and improved access to parks and open spaces for people of all abilities.

Texas Trails Day (image pending)

National Bike Month (image pending)

Ride of Silence (image pending)

When cities and counties reinforce these efforts through local government resolutions that explicitly support active transportation, they help translate shared values into meaningful action. Such commitments position trails not only as elements of a multimodal transportation system, but as essential infrastructure that strengthens quality of life, supports healthier communities, and expands access to the outdoors. By recognizing trails as catalysts for improved health outcomes, community connection, and everyday mobility, local governments help advance a more vibrant, resilient region.

A local example of this collaborative approach is the Cen-Tex Race Series, a program of the City of Killeen, Parks and Recreation Department, sponsored by Carlson Law Firm (*City of Killeen, Texas, 2026*). Races are held in cities throughout the region and beyond that inspire the community to run for a cause greater than themselves. An awards banquet is held each year for participants who complete 70% of the races on the year's series (Figure 3.4).

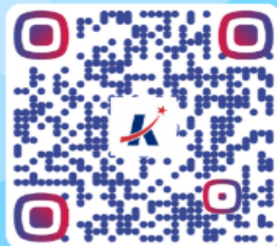
Figure 3.4 Cen-Tex Race Series 2026 Schedule



DATE	RACE	LOCATION
JAN 17	Y5K RUN TO THE POLAR BEAR PLUNGE	Copperas Cove
FEB 7	AJ HOWARD MEMORIAL 5K	Belton
FEB 28	SALADO LIONS ROAR 5K	Salado
MAR 7	CASA 5K SHENANIGANS FUN RUN	Temple
APR 4	STAN WEIK 5K CANCER STOMP	San Saba
APR 11	MPR ROSES FOR HOSES 5K	Morgan's Point Resort
MAY 9	JACKRABBIT RUN 5K & 10K	Copperas Cove
MAY 16	FALLEN HEROES 5K	Killeen
JUN 6	F3 5K	Copperas Cove
JUN 20	JUNETEENTH 5K	Killeen
JUL 11	TOUGHEST 10K IN TEXAS 5K & 1 MILE FUN RUN	Lampasas
JUL 25	CALIENTE 5K	Killeen
AUG 8	COMMUNITY CONNECTION 5K	Killeen
AUG 29	STEPS 2 STABILITY	Copperas Cove
SEP 12	FLAMINGO 5K	Copperas Cove
SEP 26	NOLANVILLE FOX TROT 5K	Nolanville
OCT 10	MK5K	Killeen
OCT 17	ROTARY MONSTER DASH 5K	Harker Heights
NOV 7	TURKEY TROT 5K	Killeen
NOV 14	SALADO BAND MUSTACHE DASH 5K	Salado
DEC 5	JINGLE BELL DASH 5K	Killeen
DEC 19	HALF MARA-FUN	Killeen

CONTACT

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(254) 501-6390



Scan QR code for registration, point system, and race contact info.



www.killeentexas.gov/centex



School-based wellness initiatives play a critical role in establishing lifelong healthy behaviors by integrating physical activity, nutrition, and supportive environments throughout the school day. Evidence-based strategies identified by the CDC demonstrate that policies such as active commuting programs, classroom activity breaks, comprehensive school physical activity programs, improved playground and greenspace design, and standards-based health education can increase physical activity, improve nutrition behaviors, support mental and social-emotional well-being, and advance health equity for students and school staff alike (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). Building on this foundation, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) provides a complementary, nationally supported initiative that makes it safer, easier, and more appealing for students to walk or bike to school, supporting many of the same health and safety goals. SRTS programs combine infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, crossings, and traffic calming with education, encouragement, and community engagement to create safer school-area environments. According to national guidance, SRTS efforts help students incorporate daily physical activity, improve academic performance, and reduce school-area pedestrian injuries by addressing both the built environment and travel behaviors. Integrating Safe Routes to School into local programs allows communities in the KTMO region to strengthen health, safety, and mobility outcomes while fostering stronger connections between schools, neighborhoods, and families.

Creating safe, active, and supportive environments for students has ripple effects that extend far beyond the school day. When communities invest in school-based wellness and Safe Routes to School programs, they are not only helping children build healthy habits, but also reducing traffic congestion around schools, improving neighborhood walkability, and enhancing overall community health (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5



When communities invest in Safe Routes to School programs, they are not only helping children build healthy habits, but also reducing traffic congestion around schools, improving neighborhood walkability, and enhancing overall community health.

These initiatives provide daily opportunities for physical activity, shown to improve academic performance, mental well-being, and long-term health outcomes and they strengthen connections between families, schools, and local agencies. By integrating Safe Routes to School into local programs, communities in the KTMO region advance shared goals around safety, mobility, and quality of life, creating environments where students and the neighborhoods around them can thrive.

Health Initiatives Promoting Outdoor Space

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) are the non-medical factors - where people are born, live, and work—that influence health outcomes (Figure 3.6). In rural areas, transportation is a primary SDoH because it dictates the practicality of accessing healthcare, healthy food, and physical

activity. Rural residents travel more than twice as far for medical care (an average of 17.8 miles) compared to urban residents, often leading to delayed care and increased disease burden (*Rural Health Information Hub, 2025*).

Figure 3.6



Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved [February 6, 2026], from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

Active transportation and outdoor access provide a "nature prescription" that combats sedentary lifestyles. By integrating walking, biking, and transit into daily routines, cities can reduce obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Beyond physical gains, just 20 minutes in nature daily lowers cortisol and blood pressure while boosting joy—benefits indoor gyms often lack. The impact is clear in urban design: Arlington, Virginia, with 99% park access, sees lower disease rates than cities with less green space. Investing in mixed-use neighborhoods and trails ensures exercise is accessible, reducing chronic stress and improving long-term mental and physical health for everyone (*ACSM, 2023 and USDOT, 2024*).

Building on these lifestyle improvements, Texas is set to receive a historic \$1.4 billion in federal funding over the next five years via the One Big Beautiful Bill Act to reshape its rural health landscape. Administered through the Rural Health Transformation Program, this \$281 million annual investment—the largest in the nation—aims to stabilize rural hospitals and bridge critical care gaps. By funding the recruitment of over 1,000 health professionals and deploying advanced

AI and telehealth tools, the initiative ensures that residents in remote areas have access to lifesaving care and chronic disease management. These resources, coupled with grants for wellness programs and facility upgrades, empower rural communities to achieve the same health outcomes as their urban counterparts, creating a sustainable and modernized healthcare ecosystem for future generations (*Texas Farm Bureau, 2026*).

Health initiatives increasingly recognize parks, trails, and green spaces as essential community infrastructure for improving physical activity, mental health, and social connection. National research shows that access to parks and trails is associated with higher levels of walking and biking, reduced stress, stronger social ties, and environmental benefits such as improved air quality and reduced heat exposure, reinforcing the role of outdoor spaces in supporting overall wellbeing (Trust for Public Land, 2023). Complementary youth-focused programs, such as the Healthy Kids Running Series, introduce children and families to safe, welcoming outdoor spaces for movement, reinforcing lifelong habits of physical activity. Together, these initiatives highlight how outdoor spaces function not only as recreational amenities, but as community-based health assets that support walking, biking, and inclusive access to active living opportunities (*Healthy Kids Running Series, n.d.*). The Healthy Kids Running Series takes place over five weeks during both the fall and spring seasons each year, and the City of Belton has had active participation in past events.

Blue Zones research emphasizes that health is shaped as much by the built environment as by medical care, with walkability serving as one of the strongest indicators of physical, mental, and social well-being. Communities designed for people—featuring walkable streets, compact life radii, reduced vehicle dependence, and accessible green spaces—support daily physical activity, reduce social isolation, strengthen community bonds, and measurably improve long-term health and longevity outcomes (*Blue Zones, n.d.*).

National programs such as Walk with a Doc offer free doctor-led walking groups. The program further demonstrates how trails and parks can serve as accessible settings for preventive health by pairing physician-led health education with group walking opportunities in outdoor environments. In the region, Baylor Scott & White Health (BSWH) supports Walk with a Doc event that encourage residents to use local parks and trails as part of routine physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices (*Baylor Scott & White Health, n.d.*).

Alternate Funding and Partnership Opportunities

Trail investments offer far more than recreational benefits—they can serve as long-term economic catalysts when planned and funded as connected, multi-purpose assets. Communities that build trails through diverse partnerships often unlock additional funding streams and demonstrate strong public and private confidence in trails as regional infrastructure. Strategic trail corridors can

link major destinations, workplaces, schools, parks, and cultural or natural amenities, helping reinforce a region’s identity while expanding opportunities for outdoor access. These investments support tourism and local business activity, but they also strengthen quality of life, talent attraction and retention, workforce development, and community health. Public-private collaboration—including contributions from local governments, healthcare systems, philanthropic partners, and employers—can accelerate trail development, diversify funding portfolios, and position trail networks as competitive regional assets. The Elizabeth River Trail provides a compelling example of this model, demonstrating how a trail system supported by major public-private partnerships can generate regional economic value, strengthen placemaking, and advance goals related to health, transportation, and sustainability (Elizabeth River Trail Foundation, 2025). When paired with national recognitions or tourism certifications, trail systems like these can elevate regional visibility, strengthen resilience, and contribute to long-term economic vitality.

Diversifying funding through public-private partnerships, philanthropic contributions, and institutional partners helps create a more resilient and adaptable funding ecosystem. Such diversification ensures that trail and outdoor investments can continue advancing even during periods of reduced grant availability, while also positioning communities to take full advantage of federal and state opportunities when they arise.

Federal and State Grant Opportunities

Federal and state grant programs remain essential for advancing trail, active transportation, and outdoor recreation projects, especially when paired with relationship-building, technical assistance, and community outreach. However, as political funding priorities shift over time, relying solely on these competitive grant programs can introduce uncertainty. Building a balanced funding portfolio that blends grants with local and regional partnerships helps ensure long-term.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program, which provides federal funding for bicycle, pedestrian, and trail infrastructure that improves safety, mobility, and access statewide. Through its Call for Projects, along with applicant workshops and guidance, TxDOT supports communities in developing competitive, community-supported proposals and navigating federal funding requirements (*TxDOT, 2025*).

In addition to TA funds, TxDOT supports local entities through grant guidance, match assistance resources, and planning capacity-building materials for bicycle-pedestrian and active transportation projects that leverage state and federal funds (*TxDOT, n.d.*). Recent TxDOT approvals totaling hundreds of millions for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects underscore the growing importance of these grants for advancing connected networks statewide (*TxDOT, 2026*).

Applicants are encouraged to regularly consult the appropriate federal grant websites to ensure they are accessing the most current information on available funding opportunities. Staying informed about Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), eligibility requirements, deadlines, and reporting expectations is essential for submitting competitive applications and maintaining compliance. Proactively monitoring updates and participating in grant webinars or training can help communities remain prepared, responsive, and well-positioned to pursue emerging funding opportunities.