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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, June 8, 2015

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Once a 'gap,' High Trestle Trail Bridge is now top spot of 600 miles of trails

The High Trestle Trail Bridge, once a gap in the regional paved trail network before opening in 2011, is today the most frequented segment of more than 600 miles of trails in Greater Des Moines, a new report shows.

This is among the findings of the 2015 Trail Counter Report by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. The MPO started collecting this trail-count data in 2012, using 40 infrared trail counters from TRAFx Research Ltd., to document demand and usage of trails in Greater Des Moines. The MPO annually provides federal funding to regional trail projects through its Transportation Alternatives Program, and this year released an interactive Central Iowa Trails Map available at dmampo.org/maps.

The report identifies the 10 most used segments of the trail network, as well as the hours, days and months with the highest usage, based on data from all locations that have had trail counters since 2012. The report also identifies 13 gaps totaling 61 miles of potential new trails that would better connect the regional trail network; a map of the gaps is included in the full report.

Top 10 Most Frequented Trail Locations*

1. High Trestle Trail (Bridge)
2. High Trestle Trail (The Oasis - R38)
3. Levee Trail (West Des Moines)
4. Clive Greenbelt
5. Raccoon River Valley Trail (Dallas Center)
6. Colby Woods
7. High Trestle Trail (Woodward)
8. Walker Johnston Park
9. Raccoon River Valley Trail (Deer Ridge Park)
10. Neal Smith Trail (NW 66th Ave.)

The full 2015 Trail Counter Report is available online at dmampo.org/reports. For more information, please call or email MPO staff at 515-334-0075 or info@dmampo.org.

** The report uses monthly totals from locations that had trail counters on them for at least one month. These data are then used to project annual totals with the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project. While actual annual trail count totals are unknown, the available data enable researchers to make reliable comparisons among trail segments to show their varying popularity.*

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) acts as a regional forum to ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to planning issues and to prepare transportation plans and programs. The MPO develops both long- and short-range multimodal transportation plans, selects and approves projects for federal funding based upon regional priorities, and develops methods to reduce traffic congestion.