Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy

Connecting People, Communities and Kansas Through Trails

2026 NEWSLETTER

Board of Directors Election

Kanza's Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, November 14 in the Community Room at the Brookside Retirement Center, 700 7th Street, in Overbrook. All KRTC members and other trails enthusiasts are invited to attend. Registration starts at 11:15 am. with lunch ($10.00) at 12:00 noon. After learning about the progress the Conservancy has made in the past year, members will elect directors to the Board of Directors.

Directors nominated for re-election are Scott Allen of Council Grove, Scott Averill of Overbrook, Clark Coan of Lawrence, Rex Fleming of Overbrook, Andy Fry of Topeka, and Owen Harbison of Ottawa.

For those eating lunch, please RSVP by October 28 by emailing: kanzatrails@gmail.com.

Any trails enthusiast can attend but if you want to join the organization, membership dues are $35 for an individual and $50 for a family. After the meeting is adjourned, attendees are invited to enjoy the autumn colors along the Landon Trail.

Lattner Family Foundation Awards Kanza $150,000

The Lattner Family Foundation of Delray Beach, Florida, awarded Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy a $150,000 grant to help with the required 20% match for a Transportation Alternatives grant. The foundation has been a longtime supporter of the Conservancy and its efforts to develop a high-quality rail-trail in Northeast Kansas.

"We really appreciate the foundation's continued support," said President John Payne. "Their commitment to our mission helps make this important rail-trail project possible."

The $150,000 award is the largest grant Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy has ever received from a foundation.

KDOT Awards Kanza $2.1 million Transportation Alternatives Grant

Kanza has been been awarded a $2.1 million federal Transportation Alternatives grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation to extend the Landon Trail 2.5 miles. Currently, the trail is complete from the trailhead at 17th & Monroe Streets in Topeka to just south of the Clinton Wildlife Area at Shawnee Heights Rd. for a distance of 17 miles. The grant will be used to develop the trail from Shawnee Heights Rd. to 121st St. North of Overbrook.

"We appreciate the support the Kansas Department of Transportation has shown for developing outdoor recreational opportunities. Kanza is working to create a remarkable recreational trail which will provide a safe place for families to walk or bicycle away from traffic," said President John Payne.

Volunteers will soon begin clearing and performing other preliminary work that can count toward the local match. The required 200 percent match is $522,000, with approximately $75,000 still needed in cash. So, any contribution is very welcome. An engineering firm will soon be selected, and construction by contractors could begin as early as February 2028.



Wakarusa River Bridge

New Trail Section to Open Soon

Directors and volunteers are clearing and mowing the seven-mile section of the Landon Trail from Michigan Valley to the Flint Hills Trail and are putting down planks on several wooden bridges to allow safe passage by trail users and maintenance equipment. **"CAUTION: TRAIL UNDER DEVELOPMENT"** signs are also being installed to alert users to ongoing work and improve safety. Since this section is not fully developed, trail users travel at their own risk. We hope that by opening this section support for finishing the trail will grow. The treadway is the original rock ballast and only suitable for mountain bikes and hikers.

Flint Hills Trail Section East of Rantoul Opens

Part of the trail was eroding into the Marais Des Cygnes River east of Rantoul and so the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks hired a contractor to this problem. This highly-scenic trail section re-opened in late September. The section between Rantoul and Osawatomie is also going to be upgraded in the next few years using the RAISE grant KDWP has been awarded.

Wakarusa Bridge Update

Board members and volunteers are nearing completion of safety improvements to the 238-foot Wakarusa River bridge by filling gaps between the steel walls and concrete deck and installing handrails. Completion is expected by year-end. Once decked and railed, the bridge will complete the Landon Trail through Shawnee County, a distance of approximately 16.5 miles. We thank the volunteers, donors, and supporters who made this milestone possible. Also, Shawnee County adopted a new Trails Master Plan in February which is intended to guide trail development for the next decade and specifically calls for connecting the Landon Trail with other trails in the area.

Trail Supporter Pledges $100,000 to Conservancy

A trail supporter has pledged $100,000 from his IRA to help with the required match needed for the Transportation Alternatives grant. The IRS requires that retirees to start taking money out of a traditional IRA at age 70 ½ and by using the Qualified Charity Distribution method one can save on taxes.

"This is an excellent way to donate to Kanza," said Treasurer Dale Wilson. *"Anyone with a traditional IRA can do this when they turn 70 ½ and any amount is welcome."*

Conservancy Has Three Retired Engineers on Board

Kanza's board includes three retired professional engineers: John Payne of Berryton, Andy Gisi of Topeka, and Rex Fleming of Overbrook. Their experience and expertise provide valuable guidance on trail design, construction, and other infrastructure projects. Owen Harbison of Ottawa is a retired railroad engineer who also provides technical expertise.

Memorial Gifts

Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy accepts donations in memory of loved ones. The donor may mail a check payable to KRTC and write "In memory of [name]" on the memo line. If a donor gives us the family's name and address, we will send them a letter acknowledging that a memorial gift was received. The amount of the donation will remain private. We will also put an acknowledgment of larger gifts ($250+) notice in an e-newsletter. To donate online go to kanzatrails.org/contact-contribute.

Trails build healthier communities, stronger economies and a brighter future for Kansas.