

IMBA Community Assessment

Welcome!

This assessment is a tool designed to provide an overview of how your community performs in eight different categories relating to natural surface trail development. Score well and you will be eligible to apply for the IMBA Trail Town Designation. Understanding where you have community gaps in the process can help identify opportunities for improvement, which will inform how your engagement with land managers, elected officials, stakeholders and funders.

Categories include:

- Access
- Existing Trails and Infrastructure
- Community Engagement & Advocacy
- Assessment
- Funding
- Trail Planning
- Stewardship
- Community Vision

Definitions for the purpose of this assessment:

Community	A community is a geographical area, such as a town, suburb, or rural region, encompassing its landscape, infrastructure, and residents. For this assessment, a community is defined as the area within a 30-minute driving radius of a central community point such as downtown. This radius includes trailheads accessible within 30 minutes.
Traditional Singletrack	Trails designed and built primarily for multiple user groups, without specific features meant to enhance the mountain biking experience.
Bike-optimized trails	Trails with features that are developed specifically to enhance the mountain biking experience, such as bermed turns, shaped rollers or jumps. They can be located on shared-use, single-use, or preferred-use trails. Bike optimized trails are not necessarily “bike-only” trails.

This survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. All questions must be answered to receive a score and corresponding recommendations. Please answer each question as accurately as possible. The best way to approach the assessment is to complete it as a team with your relevant stakeholders, which will enable valuable conversations about visions and goals for improvement.

If you have any questions about the assessment, please read our Community Guide or email Marty Caivano, IMBA's Community Engagement Manager at

marty.caivano@imba.com

Contact Information

* Your Name

* Your Email Address

* Phone Number

* City and State

* Zip Code

* Please check the box that best describes your community role

- ☐ Local advocate
- ☐ Trail or mountain bike organization
- ☐ Land Manager
- ☐ Tourism Professional
- ☐ Business Owner
- ☐ Other

* Is your community currently involved in an active trail project?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please provide more information

* Interested in learning more from IMBA about the Trail Development Process? Please select the area(s) you are interested in information on:

This is for our internal use only, we will not share your personal information.

- ☐ Community Engagement
- ☐ Funding
- ☐ Access
- ☐ Assessment
- ☐ Trail Solutions (Planning, Design)
- ☐ Trail Solutions (Construction)
- ☐ Stewardship
- ☐ IMBA eNewsletter
- ☐ IMBA Advocacy
- ☐ None of the above

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Access

Most trail development efforts begin with securing official access to publicly accessible lands. Obtaining formal permission from land managers to use existing trails or develop new ones is a critical first step. While unofficial or “handshake” agreements on privately owned land may seem like a convenient solution, they offer no long-term protection and can be revoked at any time. For lasting community benefit, trails must be developed on lands with formal, documented access agreements.

* Is mountain biking officially permitted on singletrack natural surface trails located on at least one public land in your community? If not, is your community actively working to secure official access?

Do not include dirt roads, gravel paths, paved trails, or unofficial trails on private property.

- ☐ No, there are no trails open to bikes, or there are only unofficial/unsanctioned trails, or there are only unofficial trails on private land; and no one is working toward getting access.
- ☐ No, trails are not officially open to bikes, but our community is organized and actively advocating for official public access.
- ☐ Yes, public trails are officially open to mountain bikes.

* Does your community have a trails group advocating for trail access and development?

This could be an IMBA chapter, other MTB organization, a multi-user trails group, “Friends of” group, etc. Ideally this organization is a nonprofit/501(c)3 with officers, board of directors and regular meetings.

- ☐ There is no group; or they are just forming; or they are not effective at trail advocacy.
- ☐ Yes, the group has basic engagement and effectiveness with land managers. The group knows who to talk to and can get basic permissions and needs met.
- ☐ Yes, the group is highly engaged and effective. There is real partnership with the land manager through regular meetings and/or joint projects.

If yes, please list your local trails organization:

* Does a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU), contract, or written agreement exist between local land managers/owners and your local trail group?

These agreements spell out the relationship and responsibilities between the two entities.

- ☐ No
- ☐ We have agreements with some land managers, but not all.
- ☐ An agreement exists with every land manager where trails are open to the public.

* Are your trails safely accessible by bike from points in your community, using cycling-specific infrastructure like protected bike lanes, paved greenway paths, or natural surface trail connections?

- ☐ No, a car is needed to access, or all rideable connections are on unprotected road routes.
- ☐ Yes, some trails are safely accessible, but others require riding unprotected road routes.
- ☐ Yes, a significant majority (80% or more) of trails are safely accessible.

If your community is facing challenges securing access for mountain biking, IMBA is here to help, visit the [IMBA Access Resource Page](#) for more information.

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Existing Trails and Infrastructure

While all trails offer value to a community, this assessment focuses specifically on natural surface, singletrack trails that are open to a range of users, including mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners, class 1 pedal assist eMTBs and equestrians. An ideal trail community offers a diverse mix of trail experiences, combining traditional singletrack with bike-optimized trails along with options suited to all ability levels, from beginner to advanced.

Supplemental facilities such as bike parks, pump tracks, and skills areas enhance a community's trail infrastructure by supporting skill development and attracting youth participation.

Additionally, purpose built trails (e.g., bike-only or hike/horse-only, where permitted) provide experiences tailored to specific user groups. When implemented thoughtfully, these trails as part of a larger soft surface trail network are effective tools for reducing user conflict and improving overall satisfaction for all trail users.

* How many total miles of singletrack officially open to bikes exist within a 30-minute driving radius around your community center?

- ☐ Under 10 miles
- ☐ 10 - 25 miles
- ☐ 25 miles and above

* How many total miles of singletrack officially open to bikes exist within a 30-minute pedaling radius around your community center?

- ☐ Under 5 miles
- ☐ 5 - 10 miles
- ☐ 10 miles and above

* A well-balanced trail system typically includes 20% beginner, 60% intermediate, and 20% advanced/expert trails to reflect typical user ability levels. Of the trail mileage you listed above, how close are you to this ratio?

- ☐ We aren't even close to that — we have far more of one trail type than anything else, or are missing one type entirely.
- ☐ We are off a bit — we have some variety, but most of it skews toward too much beginner trail or too much advanced trail.
- ☐ We are very close to that ratio.

* Does your community have a bike park, skills area or asphalt pump track?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet, we are in the process.
- ☐ Yes

* Are any of your trails designated hike/horse-only?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, but these are older, legacy trails that were never open to other users, rather than a strategic choice meant to balance recreation types.
- ☐ Yes, we have a trail system employing purposeful single-use trails for hikers/horses, created in balance with bike-only trails, so that each user type has trails for their own experience.

* Do the primary trailheads within your 30-minute drive radius include basic amenities like ample parking, signage and restrooms?

- ☐ None or very few trailheads have these amenities
- ☐ Most of our primary trailheads have these amenities
- ☐ All of our primary trailheads have these amenities

* Do the majority of your trail systems have consistent signage throughout, providing clear wayfinding both at the trailhead and at relevant intersections?

- ☐ None of our trail systems are signed
- ☐ Less than a majority of our trail systems are signed, and/or signage is generally inconsistent/unclear
- ☐ A majority of our trail systems are clearly and consistently signed

An **IMBA Trail Town** community should strive to offer at least two well-developed 7 - 10 mile trail systems and at least one skill-focused amenity. To ensure that residents have convenient access to meaningful trail experiences trails should be within 30 minutes of the community center. To make the experience more positive and welcoming for all, established parking should exist for the trails, plus signage and at least a minimum of trailhead amenities.

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Community Engagement

Like everything else taking place on public lands, trail development should be a community-wide process. Although the effort may begin with a group of advocates, it should eventually involve all user groups as well as entities across the community, including businesses, government officials, and many others that stand to be involved or benefit from trail development. This broad involvement takes time and effort, but is well worth it over the long haul, leading to easier approvals, funding and general support.

* Do your community's elected officials support the planning and development of trails?

- ☐ No/very little support and/or haven't started the conversation.
- ☐ Some support and engagement, but erratic/unreliable.
- ☐ All partners engaged; agreements and funding exist where needed.

* Does your community consistently support the need for trail maintenance through a dedicated funding stream? This could be a line item in city/county/forest budgets, a portion of sales tax, a standalone maintenance fund, etc.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, but the funding is inconsistently available or insufficient in amount.
- ☐ Yes, and the funding is consistently available and in sufficient amounts.

* Does your community's economic development department, tourism unit, or another public entity support the planning and development of trails?

- ☐ No/very little support and/or haven't started the conversation.
- ☐ Some support and engagement, but erratic/unreliable.
- ☐ All partners engaged; agreements and funding exists where needed.

* Does your community have an active multi-stakeholder advisory group including county or municipal representatives for outdoor recreation development?

- ☐ No/very little support and/or haven't started the conversation.
- ☐ Some support and engagement, but erratic/unreliable.
- ☐ All partners engaged; agreements and funding exists where needed.

* Does your community have a paid staff position whose primary focus is trails? This person would likely be employed by a land manager (i.e., city/county/federal agency) or by a trails group.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, part-time
- ☐ Yes, full-time

Community involvement at this level is usually a result of ongoing work done to demonstrate the value that trails bring to the community. Discover their many benefits and find initial resources to kickstart your efforts in trail development and maintenance with the **IMBA Trail Champion Starter Guide**.

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Assessment

Analyzing the use of your trails is an important step in understanding their impact and validating their construction and justifying the need for future development. These numbers can be useful for fundraising as well. Tracking ongoing maintenance needs and user feedback allows land agencies to adjust their management approach as needed.

* Does your community have mechanisms or systems in place to assess and publicly report user/rider volumes, activities, and trends?

For example, this could include trail counters, user intercept surveys, online surveys, etc. These could be implemented by your land manager(s), your trail group, or a combination of both.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, a system is in development.
- ☐ Yes, a tracking mechanism exists.

If you selected yes please share more information:

* Does your community have a mechanism established for users to communicate feedback and report trail maintenance needs?

Possible methods vary, and may include options such as:

- 1. Trail users report issues within Facebook Groups or TrailForks ride logs, hoping the information makes it to land managers.*
- 2. Trail groups collect information and convey it to the land manager.*
- 3. Land managers maintain an official website form, hotline or other portal for ongoing feedback.*

- ☐ No
- ☐ Rely on word of mouth or methods; such as unofficial Facebook groups.
- ☐ A specific communication mechanism exists.

If you have a specific communication mechanism, please describe:

Collecting trail use data and trends is an ideal way to validate the impact of your trails, learn more about the power of **collecting mountain biking data** and how to apply for **IMBA's Trails Count Grant**.

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Funding

Although trails are often less expensive than other recreation amenities, and volunteers may play a vital role in their development, funding is still a critical need for high-quality trails that will last. There are far more funding sources and strategies than can be explained here, but once a community has fully embraced the benefits of trails, support can be more easily identified and established across the entities involved.

* Is there a local fund, campaign, or organization that accepts donations to support mountain biking, outdoor recreation, and/or trails?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, minimal funding.
- ☐ Yes, impactful funding.

If you selected yes, please describe your local funding:

* Does your community use public funds, such as government grants for trail planning, development, construction and/or maintenance?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, minimal funding
- ☐ Yes, impactful funding

If you selected yes, please describe your public funding:

* Does your community use private funds, such as donations, private foundation grants or philanthropic support, for trail planning, development, construction and/or maintenance?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, minimal funding
- ☐ Yes, impactful funding

If you selected yes, please describe your private funding:

Does your community have designated funding to support outdoor infrastructure for natural surface trails?

This may be through a sales/lodging tax or other means.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

* Does your community or local organization participate in SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan) planning?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Interested in more details on funding? Visit [**IMBA's Funding FAQ**](#) resource page.

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Trail Planning

Trail planning lays the foundation for sustainable trail development, much like a blueprint guides construction. Without a thoughtful plan, trails may be built in ways that do not account for terrain constraints or user needs, leading to avoidable challenges.

This section will look at your communities planning process and to what extent it is followed.

* Has a person or organization that works on trail recreation participated in your city/county/state/forest comprehensive planning exercises and documents? How effective are they at getting recreation priorities included in these plans?

- ☐ No participation
- ☐ This person or organization is participating, but not getting the needed results.
- ☐ This person or organization is participating, and trail recreation is included in planning.

* Does your community or local organization have a natural surface trails master plan?

This could be included in a parks or open space plan.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

* Do you have a trail or Mountain Biking group that participates in local open space planning efforts? If so, are they consistently at the table during these exercises, and are they effective at advocating for trails and Mountain Bike access?

- ☐ Not participating
- ☐ Their participation is intermittent and/or ineffective.
- ☐ They consistently participate and are effective at ensuring trails and MTB access are included in these plans..

* Are the trails within your 30-minute drive radius regularly maintained?

- ☐ No, maintenance is taking place, or only a small number of trails are receiving maintenance.
- ☐ Kind of, the trails are unreliably maintained, or only maintained in a reactionary manner after weather events.
- ☐ Yes, the majority of trails receive regular maintenance.

* Do written best practices for maintenance exist for the majority of trails within your 30-minute drive radius, and are those practices applied?

These established practices ensure that the trails see regular, organized maintenance, and having them is key for the management of liability. In some cases, these instructions may sit within the land manager's responsibilities, or in others, be part of a trail organization's agreed-upon duties.

- ☐ No written best practices exist.
- ☐ Written best practices exist and are applied to some of our trails, but not all.
- ☐ Written best practices exist and are applied to all of our trails.

Thoughtful planning and design are essential to developing high-quality, sustainable trail experiences. Visit the **[IMBA Trail Planning Resource](#)** to read about the framework needed to provide the foundation for all subsequent phases in trail development.

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Stewardship

As a part of the natural landscape, even sustainably built trails require regular maintenance. They are typically maintained by the land manager, volunteers, or a combination of both. Established trailwork events provide consistent care of the trails as well as establish a reliable volunteer base. Meanwhile, group rides, clinics and social events enhance the fun factor and help bring new riders into the sport.

* Does your community have at least one organization that leads volunteer maintenance efforts?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, low priority and low participation.
- ☐ Yes, high priority and high participation.

* Do your volunteers perform high-quality maintenance, using modern best-practices as much as the existing terrain will allow?

These efforts should be supported by ongoing training and knowledge-sharing between volunteers and land managers whenever possible.

- ☐ No, maintenance efforts are haphazard and low quality.
- ☐ Yes, but at a basic level. There is a lot of room for improvement.
- ☐ Yes, volunteers are delivering consistent, high quality maintenance.

* Are there paid staff—either through the land manager or a trail group—responsible for trail inspections and maintenance?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, low priority and low participation.
- ☐ Yes, high priority and high participation.

* Does your community have organized group rides, clinics, and/or social events to bring the community together around trails and stewardship?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, low priority and low participation.
- ☐ Yes, high priority and high participation.

* Does your community have programming at local schools focused on mountain biking and/or trail stewardship, or is your community otherwise focused on getting youth on bikes/outdoors?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, low priority and low participation.
- ☐ Yes, high priority and high participation.

* Are trail closures, conditions, and maintenance events regularly communicated to the public?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, but only within the specific audience of our trails group, or through trail apps like TrailForks.
- ☐ Yes, land manager communicate to the entire community, through a standard process. Examples include: website/app/Facebook group.

* Are accurate maps of the trails in your 30-minute drive radius made publicly available?

- ☐ None of our trails are publicly mapped
- ☐ Some trails are publicly mapped, but not all; or maps exist but they are incomplete or inaccurate.
- ☐ All of our trails are completely and accurately mapped, and are publicly accessible.

Regular maintenance is essential to the long-term success and sustainability of any trail system, explore more on this topic with the [**IMBA Stewardship**](#) resource page.

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Community Vision

In places like Fruita, CO, Knoxville, TN and Bentonville, AR, multiple sectors of the community work together on a collective vision for what trails and bike amenities can bring to their residents and visitors. This vision includes all user groups from hikers to motos (where appropriate) to create a plan for all. The process shapes collaborative efforts in fundraising, trail development and stewardship in order to meet shared goals throughout the community. Reaching this level is a sign that your locale has truly embraced an ethos that recognizes the value of trails in regards to quality of life, physical and mental health, economic impact, land protection, and community pride/connection.

* Does your community have a **Trail Champion**?

A Trail Champion is a person who demonstrates the ability to consistently rally others around the vision for trail development. These people show leadership, charisma, momentum, and ability to create change.

- ☐ No, our community does not currently have a person like this
- ☐ Kind of, we have a person who embodies some of these qualities, but they're still learning how to be effective.
- ☐ Yes, our community has a person that is effective in leading community change through trails.

* Is there a broad community vision for trail development, where a variety of stakeholders (government, business, tourism, residents) recognize the benefits of trails?

- ☐ No, only a few people/organizations see the potential of trails.
- ☐ We're getting there, but some sectors of our community aren't on board yet.
- ☐ Yes, we have a shared vision across those sectors in support of trail development.

As you begin having success in trail development, think of ways that other sectors of your community can benefit or be inspired to support trails. Devise ways for this group of people/organizations to meet periodically in order to discuss shared strategies and goals. The power of this pool of ideas, perspectives and expertise can make your community into something special, leveraging all of its unique strengths into something that everyone can take pride in.

Vision setting is critical to any project's success visit the [**IMBA Trail Vision Guide and Template**](#) to map out your community vision.