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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

East Coast Greenway Officially Open for Business *Cyclists Ride Inaugural Tour of "Urban Appalachian Trail"*

This fall 10 cyclists will become the first people ever to traverse the full length of the East Coast Greenway, the nation's first long-distance urban, shared-use trail for non-motorized users. Between Sept. 12 and Nov. 3, participating cyclists will ride from Calais, Maine to Key West, Fla., averaging 60 miles daily for a total 2,800 miles.

Frequently referred to as the urban sister to the Appalachian Trail, the East Coast Greenway crosses 15 states plus Washington, D.C. and links the major cities of the eastern seaboard utilizing scores of urban greenways, park paths, abandoned railroad corridors, and waterfront esplanades. This inaugural tour accomplishes two goals, rallying critically needed funds to complete the Greenway and letting the public know that the route is ready for widespread use.

"One of the outcomes of this tour is that we will have mapped and developed cue sheets for the entire route," says Karen Votava, executive director of the East Coast Greenway Alliance. "This will enable the general public to travel the Greenway today much as hikers walked on-road sections of the Appalachian Trail in its early days. We are moving the trail from being a vision to being a facility that really functions as a tourism destination."

What does this mean for travel and exercise enthusiasts? Simply that they, too, can cycle—or walk, skate or rollerblade—all the way from the Canadian border to the southernmost point of the U.S.

Now 20 percent off road with another 30 percent in development, trail organizers have taken the next step forward in the Greenway's evolution, mapping an interim—largely on-road—route for public use while much of the trail remains under development. The trail is expected to be 80 percent off road by 2010.

Organizers hope to use this tour to showcase the East Coast Greenway as a path for people of all ages and abilities. Some of the tour's more remarkable cyclists include a paraplegic who rides a tandem bicycle with her husband and a 74-year-old Arizona man who survived a nearly fatal bicycling accident just two years ago, breaking his neck, hip, and back.

"Undertaking a ride of this magnitude will be one of the greatest things I've ever done, mentally or physically," says Jack Kurrle, accident survivor and the tour's oldest cyclist. "When the trail is completed years from now it will be a really amazing feeling to look back and think that I was a part of the first group to ride the whole thing from start to finish."

For more information on the East Coast Greenway, its inaugural end-to-end tour, or how you can get involved with the project, please visit the trail's web site at www.greenway.org.

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