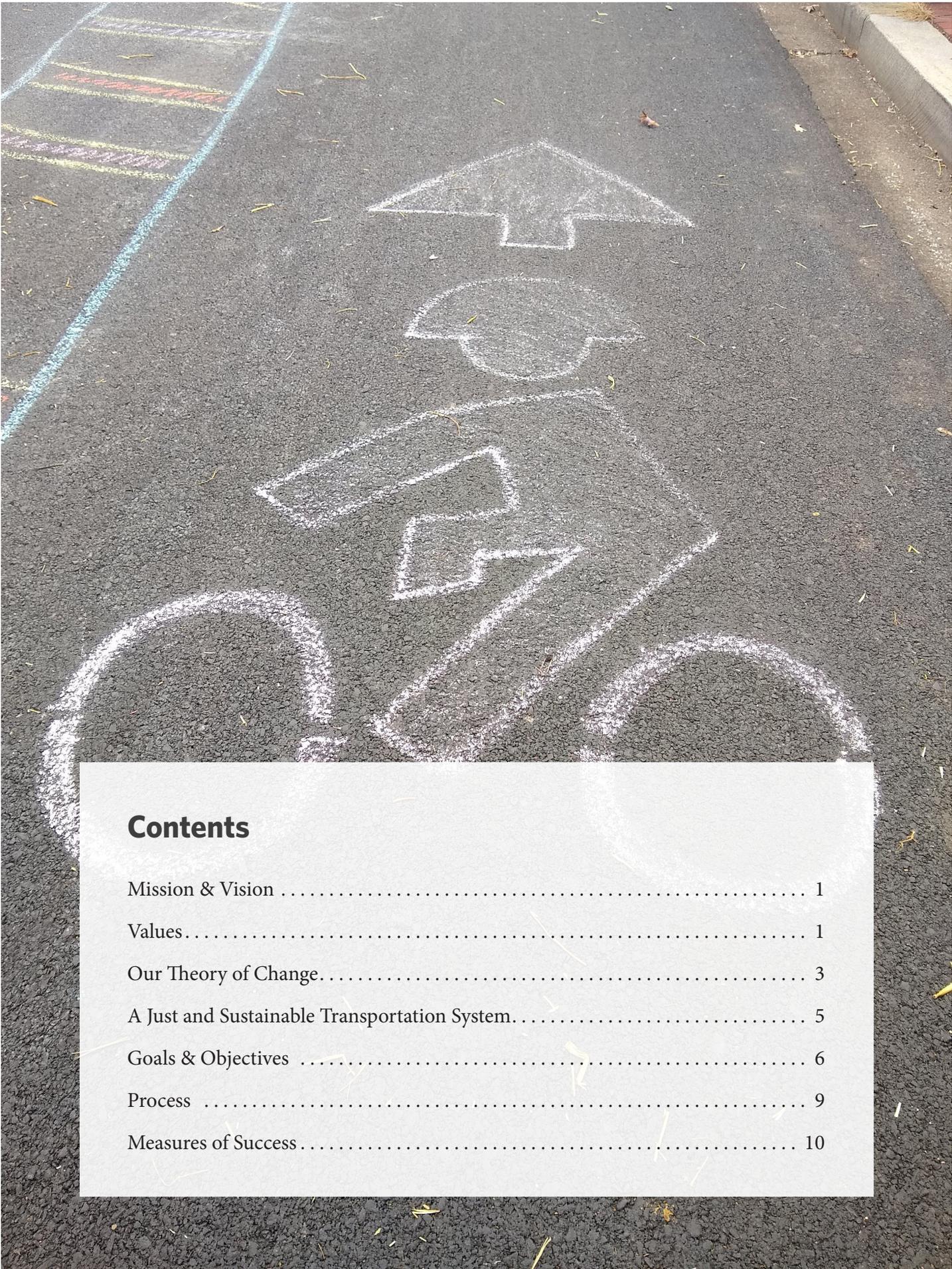




**WABA**  
WASHINGTON AREA  
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

2025 STRATEGIC PLAN





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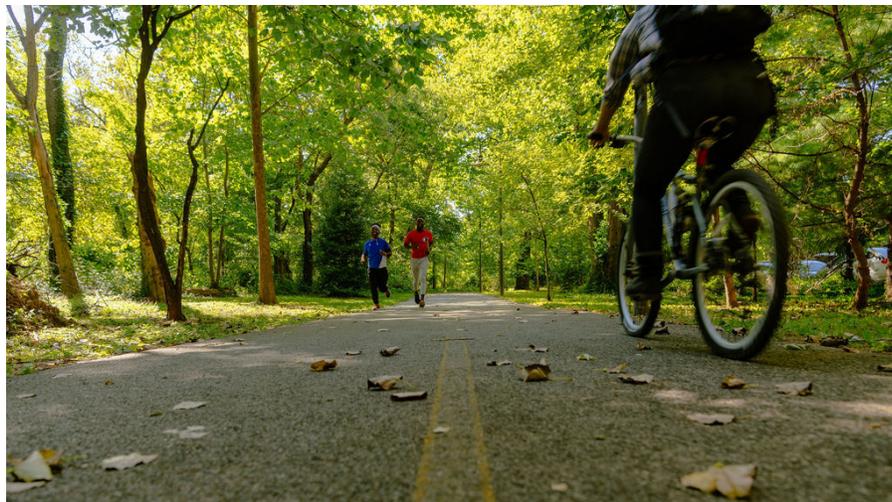
## Mission & Vision

WABA empowers people to ride bikes, build connections, and transform places. We envision a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around.

## Values

To make our vision a reality, we ground our work in five key values:

- » **Joy:** We celebrate people and share the joy of bicycling.
- » **Boldness:** We think big and transform passion into action.
- » **Integrity:** We earn trust through consistency, honesty, and transparency.
- » **Justice:** We put justice at the heart of our work.
- » **Stewardship:** We care for people and the environment, conserve resources, and evolve thoughtfully.



## Our Theory of Change

WABA acquires, manages, and distributes our limited resources in ways that align to our values and best serve the people and communities in our region. And when we're successful, our transportation system looks different — easier to use, accessible to everyone, more affordable, and climate-resilient — and more people join us for the ride.

**To build public support and encourage more people to become champions for a better transportation system, we know the simple act of bicycling can change everything.** Here's how we think about it:

Riding bikes helps people see the need for safe places to ride: multi-use trails and low-stress protected bike lanes that get them where they want to go. When our cities and counties and states build safer places to ride, more people will get on a bike. And then, when more people ride, demand for better streets and connected trails rises too.

WABA steps in at two key places along that spectrum: first, we give people the tools and resources to have a great ride, from teaching someone to ride for the very first time to helping them navigate a tricky multi-modal commute. Second, we organize community members who demand better places to ride, and ensure that our region's leaders respond to our pressure and build better places to bike. **We're simultaneously building demand and the physical space we need to make our region more just and sustainable.**



## **A Just and Sustainable Transportation System**

**At WABA, when we talk about a just transportation system, we are talking about transportation equity.** Transportation equity means that who you are doesn't limit how you get around. In an equitable transportation system, your identity and experience—your race, gender, or ability; how much money you have, and where you live—don't affect whether you can use safe, comfortable multimodal transportation options.

We are not there yet. The work of achieving transportation equity begins with addressing past and present harm. For a century, cities and towns across the country used transportation planning as a tool to divide, exclude and displace communities of color—by underinvesting in basic services like sidewalks and transit, by disconnecting street grids, and by bulldozing neighborhoods to build highways.

That planning is the foundation for the streets, sidewalks and transit systems we still use today. And they don't do what they're supposed to do: they don't keep people safe, and they don't get people where they need to go. The mobility our transportation network provides and the safety and health burdens it creates are unjustly distributed. Every change to transportation infrastructure, services, and policy must account for these injustices—and repair them.

At WABA, we know that bicycling is just one piece of our region's transportation puzzle, and our fight for safer streets is part of a larger fight to make our entire transportation system more just.

**And we know that an unjust transportation system is also an unsustainable one.** The communities that are often forced into cars because of our historic failures also suffer the greatest impacts of a car-centric culture: disproportionately high rates of traffic crashes and deaths, higher rates of asthma, greater exposure to pollutants, and more.

Many jurisdictions in the Washington, DC region have visionary climate goals, ahead of many American cities. While it can be difficult to feel optimistic under the very real weight of climate catastrophe, it's absolutely essential we move away from the culture that single occupancy vehicles are the default way to get around. **Building protected bike infrastructure and connected trails make getting out of a car an easy choice, and it's actionable.**



## Here's how WABA's making that happen.

Our 2025 Strategic Plan is guiding our staff and board for five years. Our Plan has four main goals, with 2-4 objectives affiliated with each. Each quarter, we're breaking those objectives down into actionable steps with measurable outcomes.

### **Goal 1: Empower People to Engage & Take Action**

**Objective: Identify and invest time and resources in community-led initiatives.**

This is a timely, impactful and values-aligned way to amplify our impact by supporting others in leading and owning the work. We'll allocate financial resources here, too, to help community leaders fund anything from bike rentals for a community organization to funds to support a community-led advocacy action.

**Objective: Expand WABA's role as a regional leader in just, sustainable transportation.**

We'll continue to expand our transportation equity work and programming like Families for Safe Streets. Under new leadership, we'll lean into a more expansive version of WABA, in which bicycling plays a key role in our region's sustainable transportation system.

**Objective: Cultivate deep relationships with volunteers invested in our mission.**

People are the backbone of WABA. Our volunteers play many vital roles, from running check-in at large events to helping with data entry to collecting petition signatures to selling WABA memberships to running campaigns of their own.

We'll deepen relationships with our volunteer base and ensure they have the resources, support, and relationships they deserve to have a great experience with WABA.

**Objective: Expand opportunities for aligned, intersectional voices to shape WABA's direction.**

We know WABA doesn't happen in a vacuum, and is stronger when we bring in more perspectives as we determine priorities and make difficult decisions. We'll focus on finding more ways for people to engage with the organization, including establishing a transparent path to Board service, expanding our Emeritus Council, and ensuring frequent opportunities for informal feedback from our members and supporters.

## **Goal 2: Generate Broad Public Support for Bicycling**

**Objective: Deepen and institutionalize WABA's engagement with aligned coalitions.**

WABA has established a strong foundation for coalition work, best highlighted by the Capital Trails Coalition, which we've led since 2015. Since then, we've had formal and informal coalitions and partnerships that make our work more intersectional and our reach greater—especially to communities and organizations not primarily focused on transportation issues.

**Objective: Cultivate communities that welcome people to biking.**

WABA will continue and grow our robust outreach programs, and refine the work to ensure it's culturally competent, helpful, and relevant to the people we seek to serve. We recognize that WABA doesn't define what a "biking community" is, but rather, celebrates and amplifies the many diverse communities that exist in celebration of riding a bike.

**Objective: Universalize effective, inclusive bicycling education throughout the region.**

WABA is a regional leader in adult, youth, and family bike education. Teaching people to ride has wide ripple effects and ultimately drives a long-lasting culture change, and we need to ensure it happens at scale beyond WABA's current capacity.

### **Goal 3: Build Political Power**

**Objective: Get elected officials to champion our vision.**

2022 is a key year for local and state-level elections across the region. We will prioritize finding champions among existing decision-makers and embrace the opportunity to push incumbents to make transportation equity a platform priority.

**Objective: Train and support volunteer advocates to plan and lead winning campaigns.**

Core to our organizing strategy, we will continue to build and expand our efforts to empower volunteer advocates, with an eye to supporting leaders underrepresented in transportation. We'll sharpen and refine this work to make it function at scale by building capacity among volunteers and holding all of us to ambitious goals.

**Objective: Encourage supporters to run for and win elections.**

In partnership with partner organizations and the elected officials with whom we have strong relationships, we'll find ways to support future Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners and identify potential champions for other elected positions around the region that are key to transportation issues.

### **Goal 4: Strengthen and Sustain WABA**

**Objective: Institutionalize fundraising at every level of the organization.**

Building and institutionalizing a culture of development on staff will reap benefits for years after 2025. Together, WABA staff will secure the resources from new and existing supporters that make every single element of our strategic plan possible through generous investments.

**Objective: Provide a supportive environment where people can thrive professionally.**

WABA staff are our largest and most important asset. Feedback, surveys, and listening sessions underscore the challenges, systemic racism, and implicit biases that exist in our workplace, like any other. We'll continue to improve our virtual and physical workplaces, help staff feel safe and supported, and provide opportunities for them to grow as professionals, wherever their next career steps take them.

## **This is how we got here.**

We began our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan process in March 2019 with an assessment of WABA's current strategy and future opportunities and threats. This process emphasized the input from a variety of stakeholders in order to build and broaden ownership over WABA's mission and vision. This included WABA members, staff, volunteers, donors, elected officials, government partners, as well as discovery conversations with key constituencies that WABA is not currently reaching. Our surveys and interviews revealed again and again that people want to get where they're going safely and that they want more transportation options.

WABA's staff and Board of Directors began the process of refining our mission, vision, and values during a retreat in August 2019. After several rounds of feedback and input, including from WABA's members at the 2020 Annual Meeting, the mission and vision statements were approved by the Board in November 2020. During this time, WABA's staff and Board collaboratively developed the strategic plan objectives, goals, and activities in WABA's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, which was approved March 2021 by the Board of Directors. The board approved our 2025 measures of success in September 2021, finalizing the Plan.

## **Key Findings**

The Organizational Assessment, particularly the constituent surveys, activities, and interviews, helped to reveal a set of key findings, which subsequently influenced the development of the strategic plan and guided the process of adopting a new mission and vision statement.

**Bicycling plays a vital role within our transportation network; WABA must communicate the connections between people, bicycles, our region and the planet.**

Bike issues are intersectional and provide a direct response to problems plaguing our neighborhoods, our region, our country and the planet. Accelerated climate change and limited public mobility during a global pandemic are policy issues that matter to WABA members and the public. WABA must leverage this importance to push for bold changes in public policy and funding.

**Lack of perceived safety is the number one reason why people choose not to bike.**

Garnering greater support for a network of protected bike lanes and multi-use

trails will provide safer, more equitable options for anyone looking to travel throughout the region.

**There is no such thing as a just and sustainable transportation system without equity and antiracism.**

For WABA's efforts to be successful, it is critical that we directly address and work to break down the barriers, discrimination, over-policing and harassment that BI-POC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users experience.

**WABA needs to be more engaged in the political process.**

WABA is a regional leader for active transportation issues, and has the power and influence to create long standing relationships with decision makers. These relationships should inform elected officials on issues pertinent to transportation access, equity, infrastructure and safety.

**WABA needs to lend its voice to issues that aim to create a more livable region.**

WABA can further expand its impact through developing intentional partnerships and joining coalitions with organizations that share our vision. Issues that are biking-adjacent, or are seemingly unrelated can still have a profound impact on transportation access, equity and safety. Showing up and providing support for these efforts will give WABA the opportunity to listen and learn from others, provide more diverse input on our work, and work collaboratively towards a common goal.

**And this is how we're measuring success.**

We break each of the four goals into annual and quarterly goals, which help us advance this work internally. We also have six ambitious measures we want to reach by the end of 2025:

- » Five community-led organizing campaigns distribute power and amplify WABA's impact across the region.
- » Two additional school systems provide youth bike education and broaden multi-generational support for bicycling.

- » More than 50% of legislators commit to WABA’s vision of transportation equity.
- » \$175 million of dedicated funds for the Capital Trail Coalition’s priority projects expands equitable access to transportation, recreation, and green space.
- » 10,000 WABA members sustain our work.
- » People feel and see WABA working according to our vision and values.

These targets we’ve set for WABA are ambitious, and we might not succeed in reaching all of them. We’re incorporating elements of diversity (particularly racial, gender, and geographical), equity, inclusion, and antiracism into each measure to ensure that we’re approaching each target with justice-oriented strategies that align to our values. But these measures will challenge and push us, and inspire more people to join the fight for a more just and sustainable transportation system.

**Five community-led organizing campaigns distribute power and amplify WABA’s impact across the region.**

This objective reflects our organizing strategy: WABA seeks to distribute power and amplify our impact by supporting others in leading and truly owning work that is aligned with ours and transforms our region.

To reach this target, we need to set community leaders up for success—not to sign onto a far-reaching advocacy action or call their council member, but to organize their neighbors and fight for a project they want to see built in their own community. WABA will focus on piloting these campaigns in communities where we’ve fallen short before, with a commitment to geographic diversity coupled with campaigns that center BIPOC and women leaders.

This will require not only empowering volunteers with tools and resources, but relinquishing control over the details of a campaign, and acknowledging that WABA’s institutional knowledge and power isn’t always the basis of transformation. We’ll need to refine our organizing strategy, create a volunteer toolbox and provide training, recruit and coordinate volunteer cohorts, and support community-led actions with time, staff expertise, and financial investments.

**Two additional school systems provide youth bike education and broaden multi-generational support for bicycling.**

Bicycling education will continue to be a pillar of our theory of change, but in order to effect wide and long-lasting culture change we need to ensure that this is done at scale. WABA will continue to provide direct services and high-level stewardship, but we are also aiming for transformational change like when DC Public Schools universalized bike education for all second graders.

This measure of success is the perfect centerpoint between our education, outreach, and advocacy programs, and will require them moving in lockstep to build support, identify opportunities, and push local jurisdictions to make this long-term and broad investment. If we succeed in even the two smallest public school districts in the region, we would still double the number of second graders getting universal bike education. Fairfax, Montgomery, and Prince's George's Counties would each be over 250% increase.

**More than 50% of the region's legislators commit to WABA's vision of transportation equity.**

WABA has pushed for better transportation options for 50 years. For the next five years we will leverage that experience to push for a regional transportation equity platform that centers justice and sustainability.

To meet this target we will need to push all of our strategic goals. We will need to expand our reach and build strong coalitions in order to create broad public support for these policies. And, primarily, we will need more organizing power, both direct and distributed, to get decision makers, whether incumbents or supporters running for office, to make commitments that push our region towards a better transportation future and a more livable region.

We decided to focus our attention on legislatures because they are more directly accountable to their constituencies—specifically, the DC Council, Arlington County Board, Fairfax County Council, Alexandria Council, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County Council. While the executive roles hold tremendous power, legislative bodies are able to exert influence and checks on the executive. Finally, focusing on the legislative allows us to build power over time, whereas we will only have one executive election per jurisdiction during our strategic plan.

**\$175 million of dedicated funds for the Capital Trail Coalition's priority projects expands equitable access to transportation, recreation, and green space.**

WABA expects to have all jurisdictions adopt a resolution in support of completing the remaining top 40 priority projects by 2025 and the full network by 2030. This is an important step in getting elected officials to champion our vision, but we must continue to build broad public and political support to ensure that these projects are fully funded and built by 2025.

The impact of completing the 40 priority trail projects is huge and would be transformational for the region. It will bring access to transportation, recreation, and green space to an additional 231,000 residents in underserved areas that have

historically lacked safe access to trails and open space (61% of whom are Black and 14% of whom are Hispanic).

### **10,000 WABA members sustain our work.**

This membership goal helps to sustain and strengthen WABA in several ways. It is directly tied to our ability to flex our political power—getting folks to take action and demand a just and sustainable transportation system. Similarly, it is an indicator of our ability to expand our reach to new people who share our vision. Finally, our membership helps to reach our revenue goals and lower our dependence on government funds.

In order to reach this target, we need staff-wide commitment to membership recruitment, clear member benefits, a low barrier to entry, a scalable peer-to-peer model, and financial investments in marketing campaigns.

WABA currently has about 5,800 members, which is near our all-time high. Reaching 10,000 members would require a 15% increase per year from 2022-2025. We will also track retention, the geographic and demographic diversity of membership, and member engagement.

### **People feel and see WABA working according to our vision and values.**

WABA is an organization driven by people—members, supporters, advocates, and volunteers—all guided by staff who are equally passionate about our mission and share our values.

Achieving our other measures of success at the expense of our values would be a failure. While we will seek to bring joy, boldness, integrity, justice, and stewardship to all that we do, we will center this evaluation in two avenues. First, through employee wellness and professional growth by understanding the resources people need to be successful at WABA and in their career overall, and measuring our ability to deliver that support. Second, through WABA's expenses: where we spend our money and how we make decisions about the resources our donors trust us to use to advance our mission.

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## How you can help

The backbone of all of this work, and our future success, is made possible only by the generous financial support of more than 6,000 WABA members — people for whom part or all of this work inspires to imagine a more fun bike ride, a more accessible transportation system, a more climate-resilient region. At WABA, any personally meaningful financial contribution makes you a member for a year, and moves us closer to the future we want for our region. **Will you join us?**

**[waba.org/give](https://waba.org/give)**

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