



June 30, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which was created in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, plays an absolutely essential role in funding state trail programs and projects all across the country. As national, regional and local organizations that support recreational trails, we urge you to reauthorize the RTP in the upcoming multi-year surface transportation legislation and to include funding for this important program in the amount of \$690 million (over a six-year period).

Funding for the RTP, which is administered by the Federal Highway Administration, comes from the federal taxes paid on gasoline used in nonhighway recreation and is distributed to the states based on a formula that recognizes the user-pay/user-benefit character of the program. RTP funds are distributed through the state transportation departments and natural resource agencies in cooperation with citizen advisory committees and a network of organizations and communities. These partners leverage available funding with cash and in-kind support. Work for these projects is primarily done by youth corps, volunteers, and small businesses.

The RTP funding-distribution process is proven, having successfully funded in excess of 10,000 projects across the nation over the past 18 years. Despite this success, however, there is still a backlog of good-quality, eligible projects, which exceeds the RTP funding available under SAFETEA-LU, the current transportation legislation, by a ratio of at least 3:1. For this reason, and because past legislation failed to make available all of the funds attributable to nonhighway recreation use of gasoline, we are requesting increased funding for the RTP.

By providing convenient, enjoyable opportunities for people to spend more time outdoors, trails encourage healthier living. Trails are an investment in the future of our communities and our public lands, while connecting people of all ages and backgrounds to the environment – which is good for them and good for the world that surrounds them.

We have seen firsthand the power of these projects to transform communities and transform people. Indeed RTP-funded projects represent investments in vital infrastructure that promote healthy communities and more importantly, healthy people. In addition, the economic impact of these projects is magnified because they improve access to public lands and waters and support both local tourism and recreation businesses, as well as healthy lifestyles.

**COALITION
FOR
RECREATIONAL
TRAILS**

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Our thousands of members and allies believe that reauthorizing the Recreational Trails Program will achieve both important economic stimulation and strategic investments that will help transform American communities and lifestyles for long-term success.

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) has prepared the enclosed paper that provides additional background, as well as some recommended modifications to the RTP. For more information, we invite you to contact one of the Co-Chairs of the Coalition for Recreational Trails: Marianne Fowler (Marianne@railstotrails.org) or Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com).

Please join Americans across the country in supporting the Recreational Trails Program as part of the new federal transportation bill. Thank you for your leadership in addressing our nation's transportation challenges.

Sincerely,

National/International Membership Organizations

All-Terrain Vehicle Association
America Bikes
American Council of Snowmobile Associations
American Hiking Society
American Horse Council
American Motorcyclist Association
American Recreation Coalition
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Trails
Americans for Responsible Recreational Access
Back Country Horsemen of America
Bikes Belong Coalition
BlueRibbon Coalition
The Corps Network
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource
Groundwork USA
International Association of Snowmobile Administrators
International Mountain Bicycling Association
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association
Motorcycle Industry Council
National Association of Recreation Resource Planners
National Association of State Park Directors
National Association of State Trail Administrators
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
North American Trail Ride Conference
Partnership for the National Trails System
Professional Trail Builders Association
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
Tread Lightly!, Inc.

Other Supporters

Access4Bikes, California
Alabama Horse Council
Alabama State Parks Division
Alaska Trails
Alaska Transportation Priorities Project
All Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota
Alta Planning + Design
Amateur Riders Motorcycle Association of Minnesota
Appalachian Mountain Club
Arizona State Parks
Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs
A. O. Smith Corp., Kentucky
Back Country Horsemen of Washington State
Bay Area Barns and Trails, California
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, California
Bay Circuit Alliance, Massachusetts
Bay State Trail Riders Association, Massachusetts
Beneficial Designs, Inc., Nevada
Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Inc., Massachusetts
Bicycle Coalition of Maine
Bicycle Trails Council of Marin, California
Bigfoot Bicycle Club, California
Big Lake Trails, Inc., Alaska
Black Hills Mountain Bike Association, South Dakota
Blackwater Trail Riders, New Hampshire
Brown & Danos landdesign, inc., Louisiana
Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen, Arkansas
Burlington Recreation and Parks Department, North Carolina
California Recreational Trails Committee
California Trail Users Coalition
California Trails & Greenways Foundation
Capitol Off-Road Pedalers, Wisconsin
Carolina Trail Builders, North Carolina
Carroll County Board, Illinois
Carson Valley Trails Association, Nevada
Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association, Georgia
Central Illinois Mountain Bike Association
Central New York Dedicated Individuals for Responsible Trail-use
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Washington
Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association, Wisconsin
Choose Outdoors, Colorado
Chowan County Tourism Development Authority, North Carolina
The City of Bogalusa, Louisiana
City of Fresno Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services
Department, California
City of Lafayette Parks, Trails and Recreation Department, California
City of Monroe, Louisiana
City of Oxford Parks and Recreation, North Carolina
City of Pasadena, Department of Public Works, California

The City of Somerville, Massachusetts
Clayton Parks and Recreation Department, North Carolina
Coastal Land Trust, California
Coastwalk California
Colcom Foundation, Pennsylvania
Concerned Long Island Mountain Bikers, New York
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Connecticut Horse Council Inc.
County Line Riders of Catalina, Inc., Arizona
Crossroads Cycling Club, North Carolina
Cumberland Trail Conference, Tennessee
Cyclists of the Gitchee Gumees Shores, Minnesota
Dallas Off-Road Bicycle Association, Texas
Danvers Bi-Peds, Inc., Massachusetts
Delaware Equine Council
Delaware Trail Spinners
Derry Area Recreational Board, Pennsylvania
Downhill Coalition, Oregon
Draper City Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee, Utah
Eastern Trail Alliance, Maine
El Dorado Equestrian Trail Foundation, California
Equestrian Partners in Conservation, Maryland
Equestrian Trails, Inc., California
Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department, Alaska
Faribo Sno-Go Club, Minnesota
Florida Green Guide Association
The Florida Mudcutters, Inc.
Florida Trail Association
Foothill Trail Hounds, California
Friends of Gillette Castle State Park, Connecticut
Friends of Harkness Park, Connecticut
Friends of Lakes Folsom and Natoma, California
Friends of Southampton Greenway, Massachusetts
Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, Michigan
Friends of the Edgewood-Oak Brush Plains Preserve, New York
Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail, Massachusetts
Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, North Carolina
Friends of the Ouachita Trail, Arkansas
Friends of the Riverfront, Pennsylvania
Gallatin Equestrian Partnership, Montana
Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Montana
Gaston County Parks and Recreation, North Carolina
Gem State ATV Association, Idaho
Get Outdoors USA!, Washington, D.C.
The Goethe Trail, Inc., Florida
Granite State Carriage Association, New Hampshire
Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk, Massachusetts
Great Barrington Land Conservancy, Massachusetts
Greater Houston Off-Road Biking Association, Texas
Greater Memphis Greenline, Tennessee
Groundwork Lawrence, Massachusetts

Hanover Idling Awareness, New Hampshire
Hartigan Management, North Carolina
Hickory Hideaway, Illinois
High Rides Mountain Bike Club, Florida
Highlands Plateau Greenway, North Carolina
Human Powered Trails, Inc., Wisconsin
Hunterdon Horse & Pony Association, New Jersey
Illinois Trail Riders
Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, Alaska
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Iowa OHV Association
Ipswich Bay Circuit Trail Committee, Massachusetts
Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department, North Carolina
The Jena Times, Louisiana
Jersey Action Riders Mountain Bike Club
Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association
Kansas Horse Council
Kings Mountain Gateway Trails, Inc., North Carolina
Kingston Conservation Commission, Massachusetts
Klamath Mountain Bike Association, Oregon
Lafayette Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission, California
Lake Mansfield Alliance, Massachusetts
Lancaster Recreation Commission, Pennsylvania
Lassen Land and Trails Trust, California
Laurel Foundation, Pennsylvania
Lewiston Trails Group, California
Linn County Conservation Board, Iowa
Long Island Greenways and Healthy Trails, New York
Louisiana Equine Council
Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, Massachusetts
Miami Valley Mountain Bike Association, Ohio
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts
Millstone Trailblazers, New Jersey
Minnesota Off Road Cyclists
Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association
Mississippi River Trail, Inc., Arkansas
Mohave Desert ATV Riders Association, Arizona
Montana Snowmobile Association
The Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association
Muttontown Horsemen's Association, New York
National Forest Association – Los Padres, California
The Natural Gait, LLC, Iowa
Nebraska State Snowmobile Association
New England Mountain Bike Association
New Hampshire BikeSmart
New Hampshire Horse Council
New Hampshire Quarter Horse Association
New Jersey Horse Council
New York City Mountain Bike Association
New York State Horse Council, Inc.

Newtown Bridle Lands Association
North Ada County Foothills Association, Idaho
North Carolina Paddle Trails Association
North Carolina Recreation & Park Association
North Country Trail Association, Michigan
Northern Area Alaska Parks Citizen Advisory Board
Ocala Mountain Bike Association, Florida
Okanogan Valley Chapter, Back Country Horseman of Washington
Oregon State Snowmobile Association
Ouachita Mountain Hikers, Arkansas
Ozark Greenways, Inc., Missouri
Paiute ATV Trail Committee, Utah
The Parish of St. Charles, Louisiana
Parks & Trails New York
Pasadena Mountain Bike Club, California
Pennsylvania Equine Council
Pennsylvania Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association
Piscataqua Hounds, New Hampshire
Piscataquog Area Trailways, Inc., New Hampshire
Plaquemines Parish Off Road Committee, Louisiana
R. B. Lohr & Company, New Hampshire
Rapids Riders Club, Minnesota
Redding Mountain Biking Club, California
Reno Wheelmen, Nevada
Resource Technology, Inc., New Mexico
St. Mary Parish Government Department of Economic Development, Louisiana
Sam Houston Forest Equestrian Association, Texas
San Diego Mountain Biking Association, California
Santa Clara County Parks, California
Save Mercer And Ride the Trails, New Jersey
Schuyler Snowstars, Nebraska
Shady Grove Recreation District, Louisiana
Shawnee Trail Conservancy, Illinois
Shore Riders Pony Club, New Jersey
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc., New York
Somerset Horse and Pony Association, New Jersey
Sonoma County Trails Council, California
South Carolina Horsemen's Council
South Dakota Snowmobile Association
South Eastern Distance Riders Association, Florida
Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association, Georgia
Southwest Conservation Corps
Spring Township Parks and Recreation, Pennsylvania
Stark County Park District, Ohio
Stock Horse of Wisconsin
Susquehanna River Trail Association, Pennsylvania
Syracuse Snoflakes Snowmobile Club, Nebraska
Tahoe Rim Trail Association, Nevada
Takahik River Valley Hikers, Arkansas
Tehachapi Mountain Trails Association, California

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Tennessee Commission on Greenways and Trails
Tennessee Rovers
Texas Motorized Trails Coalition
Texas Parks & Wildlife
The Town of Apex, North Carolina
The Town of Bethania, North Carolina
Town of Georgetown Rec Path Committee, Massachusetts
Town of Kentwood, Louisiana
Town of Millinocket, Maine
Town of Olla, Louisiana
Town of Port Barre, Louisiana
Town of Vernon Parks and Recreation Department, Connecticut
Trail Management Services LLC, Ohio
Trail Mix, Inc., Alaska
Trails Trust of Humboldt Bay, California
Triangle Greenways Council, North Carolina
Twin Cities Trail Riders, Minnesota
Utah Snowmobile Association
Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers, Alaska
Vermont Horse Council
Vermont Mountain Bike Association
Virginia Horse Council
Walkill Valley Rail Trail Association, New York
Walpole Trails Committee, Massachusetts
Wachusett Greenways, Inc., Massachusetts
Warrenton Trails Association, Oregon
Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
Weber Pathways, Utah
West Ouachita Youth Sports Association, Louisiana
Woodlands Trail and Park, Louisiana
XCSkiResorts.com, New Hampshire
Yadkin River Greenway Council, North Carolina
YMCA of Northeast Louisiana
York County Rail Trail Authority, Pennsylvania

cc: Members, United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Members, United States Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Members, United States Committee on Finance Subcommittee on Energy, Natural
Resources, and Infrastructure

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

- The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and reauthorized again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) .
- The legislation applies the “user-pay/user-benefit” philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund, returning federal tax on fuel used for nonhighway recreation to the states for trail projects.
- Eligible projects include: maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails; development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails; purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; construction of new recreational trails (with specific requirements when federal land is involved); acquisition of easements and fee simple title for recreational trail corridors; and assessment of trail conditions. State administrative and educational program costs are capped at 7% and 5% respectively. States are encouraged to work with qualified youth conservation or service corps.
- After a slow start under ISTEA, when \$37.5 million was made available for the program, funding has grown substantially and, by September 30, 2009, nearly \$730 million will have been made available to states for recreational trails. Half of all funding is apportioned to the states equally. The remaining 50% is apportioned among eligible states based upon nonhighway recreational fuel use in each of those states during the preceding year.
- Thirty percent of funds are to be spent for uses relating to motorized recreation; 30% are to be spent for uses relating to nonmotorized recreation. In addition, 40% shall be used for projects that facilitate diverse recreational trail use within a recreational trail corridor, trailside or trailhead.
- The Recreational Trails Program has had a dramatic and positive impact on the quality of life in America through thousands of projects nationwide and through new cooperation among diverse trail enthusiasts, government officials at the federal, state and local levels, and national organizations in the conservation, recreation, and transportation fields. We also now understand better the role of RTP-aided trails in the nation’s campaign to attack inactivity and obesity.
- ***As Congress develops the next national surface transportation program, the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) urges the following modifications to the Recreational Trails Program:***
 - 1) ***increase funding to \$690 million over six years: \$90/100/110/120/130/140 million;***
 - 2) ***provide \$2.5 million in funding for a USDOT study of nonhighway recreational fuel use;***
 - 3) ***adjust allowed FHWA administrative expenses to 1% of actual available annual funding, and permit up to 100% federal share for approved administrative expenses and projects;***
 - 4) ***simplify funding provisions for projects on federal lands, incorporating provisions applicable to federal lands highway projects that allow up to 100% federal share;***
 - 5) ***recommit to and codify provisions encouraging use of youth conservation corps and volunteers*** (see www.corpsnetwork.org/images/stories/transportation/TCN_GuideBook_FINAL.pdf for examples);
 - 6) ***exempt RTP projects from review by Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning processes*** where the projects are (1) recreational in character, (2) less than \$100,000 in total cost and (3) include major volunteer effort; and
 - 7) ***allow credit for donated easements and rights-of-way*** as part of a project’s non-federal cost if done within 18 months of project authorization.

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