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December 23, 2008

President-elect Barack Obama
Washington, DC

Dear President-elect Obama:

The economic recovery package puts our nation at a critical crossroads in terms of infrastructure priorities. The notion that state Departments of Transportation should be given full flexibility to allocate stimulus dollars without applying typical sub-allocations to metro areas and Transportation Enhancements would result in an outmoded lopsided focus on building roads. The better alternative is for Congress to establish a balanced set of transportation investments that will put Americans to work now while also providing affordable, clean and healthy transportation options for our future.

Building rail-trails and other bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure creates as many or more jobs per dollar as does constructing other transportation projects. These are green jobs that directly support Main Street with decisions made close to home and employment opportunities for a wide range of small contractors. Further, these projects tend to be more labor intensive than highway projects that have relatively high material costs and they are easier to ramp up quickly because they are of a manageable scale.

Nearly 15,000 Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) supporters have thus far signed the following petition requesting funding for trails, walking and biking in the economic recovery package.

I support explicit funding for trails, walking and biking in the upcoming economic recovery package. Funding active transportation is a cost-effective investment that creates jobs and leads to healthier people, stronger communities, decreased oil dependency, and reduced climate change emissions.

This popular outcry reflects a widespread view at the community level that states have often failed to recognize the potential to improve transportation and quality of life by providing safe and convenient ways to walk and bike for short trips. Active transportation systems strengthen public transportation, and together they enable people to forgo the high costs of driving for a wide range of everyday needs. Biking and walking already account for nearly 10% of all trips. With half the trip destinations in America within a 20-minute



bike ride, it is both realistic and prudent to make transportation investments that will shift more driving trips to these modes. Modest shifts from driving to bicycling and walking will provide tens of billions of dollars in annual benefits in the form of reduced oil dependence, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion and improved public health.

RTC, working with America Bikes and other allies, has identified over \$2.14 billion in ready to go bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects that can get underway in a matter of months. This list is not comprehensive, but only a beginning. Unquestionably it shows there are extensive opportunities to put Americans to work at the community level building active transportation systems that will create safe and convenient places to bicycle and walk in cities and towns across the country. RTC has also begun to collect bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects that could be constructed in less than two years, but would require more lead time than those included in the initial list. We have thus far identified an additional 487 projects totaling over \$1.23 billion. The bicycle and pedestrian total now tops \$3.38 billion for 1,220 projects, and could go much higher with additional time and attention. And since many of these projects will fill gaps in utilitarian networks in metropolitan areas, the strategic opportunity to improve mobility and public health while reducing pollution and oil dependence is undeniable.

Please ensure that the economic recovery package provides explicit support for bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects. Maintaining sub-allocations to Transportation Enhancements is one viable means to accomplish this objective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Mills". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a stylized "Mills".

Kevin Mills
Vice President of Policy
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy