





Milwaukee's Oak Leaf Trail, part of the Route of the Badger network, has benefited from more than \$3 million in TA investment since 2010. | Photo by Front Room Photography

Developing a pipeline of projects is also helpful when working to complete trail and active transportation networks; states can direct funds where they are most needed, anticipate subsequent priorities and clarify overall funding needs going forward to achieve connectivity objectives. Additionally, a new set-aside in the BIL provides states the flexibility to use up to 5% of their TA funds for technical assistance programs, which may help communities with the greatest needs and limited capacity to effectively access TA funds. In Kansas, all interested TA applicants must complete a concept plan before applying for funds, which gives the Department of Transportation the opportunity to conduct site visits, provide technical assistance and offer feedback to strengthen TA applications.<sup>2</sup> The technical assistance set-aside could help states implement similar programs, bringing the benefits of trails and active transportation to more communities.

TA funds are critical to the creation of active transportation infrastructure, like trails, which safely connect people to each other, create economic vitality and promote health and outdoor mobility. The program innovations and increased TA funds included in the BIL provide states with new opportunities to increase their investments in trails while working to meet the unmet demand, in turn creating outsized economic benefits in trail communities.<sup>3</sup> States must act expeditiously to make the most of these program changes and empower communities to deploy TA-eligible projects to realize the full potential of their TA investments.

<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Year 2021 was funded under a one-year extension of the FAST Act. Demand for funds is calculated using "aggregate costs for applications received" data from the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternatives Annual Reports, [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation\\_alternatives/annual\\_reports](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/annual_reports).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Ellen Koontz and Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D., *Transportation Alternatives Spending Report Fiscal Years 1992-2019* (Washington, DC: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D., Kevin Mills, J.D., and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D., *Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity* (Washington, DC: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2019).

## About TrADE

Since the inception of TE in 1991, RTC's TrADE initiative has assisted stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels in understanding and implementing the TE/TA programs. Through technical support and the publication of our annual Transportation Alternatives Spending Report, RTC works with TA program managers, advocates and policymakers to support and promote the efficient use of these funds for trails, walking and biking. From 1996 to 2013, TrADE operated at the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse as a partnership between RTC and the Federal Highway Administration.

For more info, visit [rtc.li/TrADE-pubs](https://rtc.li/TrADE-pubs) or email [spendingreport@railstotrails.org](mailto:spendingreport@railstotrails.org).

