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Congress Needs to Shape White House Infrastructure Proposal to Prioritize Transportation Options that America Needs

WASHINGTON—The White House infrastructure proposal released today offers much needed additional federal investment in transportation, but does not settle the critical question of the kinds of investments America most needs, according to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). RTC cautions that transformative impact will only be realized by investing in a balanced transportation system that enables states and regions to meet emerging 21st-century mobility needs and provides affordable transportation choices. Trail and active transportation networks are essential to a complete and balanced transportation system.

“The proposal released by the White House today outlines new methods for directing infrastructure spending that can be shaped by Congress to maximize public benefits. To do so, however, the evaluation criteria for infrastructure investment need to fundamentally shift, placing much higher importance on the social and economic outcomes that projects will deliver so that investment serves public need rather than private interests,” said Kevin Mills, RTC’s senior vice president of policy.

“When we look at the real-world outcomes that the White House infrastructure plan aims to achieve by investing in infrastructure—trails and active transportation networks excel at them all. Many of these projects bring considerable private, state and local investment to the table; federal active transportation investments deliver superior economic and social impact, and many regional trail projects are economic engines for rural communities. Yet, neither proposals from the administration nor Congress have addressed how strategic investments in walking and biking networks can meet federal goals for infrastructure spending and changing public mobility needs,” said Mills.

“The most important next step that Congress can take on infrastructure is to define a realistic funding plan that concentrates investment in those projects that generate the most transformative impact per dollar spent—including trail, walking and biking infrastructure.”

RTC is calling on Congress to ensure that connected trail and active transportation networks are included in any federal infrastructure legislation. Specifically, this includes increasing funding for active transportation, focusing investment on completing trail and active transportation networks, and including active transportation projects across federal transportation programs.

For more information on the role of trail infrastructure in transforming America, visit RTC’s website.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.