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FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY AGENDA OUTLINES STRATEGY TO CREATE ACCESS TO JOBS, MOBILITY AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and PeopleForBikes call on federal policymakers to prioritize active transportation networks as essential infrastructure and key components of transportation, economic stimulus and climate legislation

WASHINGTON—As election results continue to come in, federal policymakers are already looking to the year ahead when the next Congress and the White House will be tasked with the country’s economic recovery and reauthorization of the nation’s federal transportation bill. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) and PeopleForBikes today released a federal agenda to guide policymakers, detailing the policy changes and resources needed to maximize the benefits of the nation’s trails, walking and biking networks, providing equitable access to jobs, mobility and safe places to get active outdoors.

The nation’s leading organizations and companies representing trails, biking, walking, local elected officials, health, transportation reform, environment, disability rights and outdoor recreation have signed on in support of the agenda as an essential part of the nation’s transportation system, and as a key component of any economic stimulus and climate legislation.

RTC and PeopleForBikes will host a joint webinar on Nov. 10, from 1 to 2 p.m. EST, to discuss strategies for implementing the agenda based on election outcomes. Members of the press can register here.

“This year has found more Americans than ever walking, biking and using trails, accelerating a growth in trail use, outdoor recreation and active transportation that has been building for years,” said Kevin Mills, vice president of policy for RTC. “We have an unprecedented opportunity to work with federal policymakers to put Americans to work building the strategic connections that enable healthy and resource-saving habits, unlocking billions of dollars for the U.S. economy.”

“Our nation needs smart federal policy that supports the record number of Americans relying on bikes, trails and active transportation infrastructure to move efficiently and recreate responsibly. We’re asking to increase funding for connectivity and safety while strengthening the focus on climate change and mobility,” said PeopleForBikes CEO Jenn Dice. “We look forward to working with all our industry members, advocacy partners and federal policymakers to keep the bike boom rolling in 2021.”
At this moment of pending transition in the federal government, the policy agenda outlines the transformational investment in connected active-transportation infrastructure necessary to sustain and grow the boom in bicycling, walking and trail use; create good jobs; and meet the mobility needs of underserved communities and historically disinvested populations.

Key elements of the agenda follow, with an emphasis on strategic investments in programs that prioritize the connectivity of trails, walking and biking, which will have the potential to generate an estimated $138 billion per year in economic benefit to the nation:

- Prioritize investments that link existing trails, bikeways and sidewalks into functional networks that connect people to key destinations and communities to each other, with special attention to the needs of underserved communities. Competitive federal active transportation connectivity grants are essential to enable communities to establish low-stress routes to walk and bike.
- Through reauthorization of the FAST Act, double dedicated project funding for trails, walking and biking through Transportation Alternatives and the Recreational Trails Program to ensure resources are available in every city and state to meet the growing demand for safe places to walk, bike and move.
- Establish an Active Transportation Administration within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).
- Pilot strategies to make transportation planning practices equitable and responsive to neighborhood priorities, and revive the USDOT initiative to promote equitable outcomes.
- Prioritize and incentivize active transportation as a critical strategy in cutting carbon emissions from transportation.
- Develop regulations governing the use of electric bicycles on public lands that are consistent across federal agencies and responsive to the needs of local land managers and the public.

The Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2) passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2020, offers a strong baseline for the policies and investments outlined by RTC and PeopleForBikes. Similarly, the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis’ Climate Action Report supports many important policy advances relating to infrastructure, equity and building for resiliency.

Media can register here for the webinar on Nov. 10, from 1 to 2 p.m. EST, during which RTC and PeopleForBikes will further examine the political challenges of moving this agenda forward and advancing transformative federal investments in active transportation.

Learn more at railstotrails.org/trailstransform.

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.

PeopleForBikes is making biking better for everyone by uniting millions of Americans, thousands of businesses and hundreds of communities to make every bike ride safer, more accessible and more fun. When people ride bikes, great things happen. Join us at PeopleForBikes.org.

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