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## **Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: “INVEST in America Act” Goes Far To Deliver the Transportation Infrastructure America Needs**

*Nation’s largest trails and active transportation advocacy organization points to new program connecting trail, walking and biking infrastructure as an innovative start to delivering a safe, equitable multimodal transportation system for the country*

**WASHINGTON**—The “Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act,” the federal transportation reauthorization bill released today by the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, delivers substantial opportunities to fuel the future of walking and biking across the U.S., according to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). Yet, the organization says, there is room to commit to ongoing investment in an innovative new strategy to connect active transportation infrastructure that will make it safer, more equitable and more convenient for people to get around on foot and by bike.

“Through the INVEST in America Act, the House T&I Committee tackles many of the most critical issues facing America’s transportation system—including safety, climate and maintenance,” said Kevin Mills, RTC’s vice president of policy.

“The bill recognizes and advances policies to address the tragic and growing number of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities that occur on our roads and it creates incentives to cut carbon emissions,” said Mills. “It makes active transportation eligible for many programs and increases dedicated investment in trails, walking and biking programs to more than \$1.5 billion a year—allocating resources to the nation’s fundamental active transportation funding programs like Transportation Alternatives and the Recreational Trails Program, while ensuring that Transportation Alternatives funding remains dedicated to its intended purpose in all states. Especially exciting is a new investment to connect walking and biking facilities within our communities and between regions.”

RTC points to a new program included in the bill—Active Transportation Connectivity Grants, which would provide \$250 million in FY24 for projects that make critical links between existing facilities to create safe walking and biking networks—as an essential investment that should be reinforced with additional resources as the bill is negotiated and finalized.

“Investing in the connectivity of bicycling and walking routes leverages existing infrastructure to create functional networks that link communities and connect people on foot or on bike with everyday destinations within cities and towns. This is what our country needs to maximize the mobility and economic benefits derived from decades of building active transportation projects,” said Mills. “We’re pleased to see the bill reinforce current federal active transportation funding programs that provide necessary breadth of investment, supporting bicycling facilities in every jurisdiction. But these programs were not designed to build active transportation networks in a timely manner.”

RTC points to surging rates of trail use and bicycling nationwide brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic as one example of the outsized demand and need for trails and active transportation that has existed for years. The organization has spearheaded efforts to gather trail and active transportation network projects that would be ripe for immediate federal investment with the potential to deliver quick transportation and economic benefits.

“In just a few short weeks, we’ve gathered trail and active transportation network projects that represent 63 distinct regions. These plans represent an initial sampling of the overall need to build the nation’s active transportation system,” said Mills. “These projects would take decades to complete under the traditional funding models for walking and biking infrastructure. An ongoing investment in connectivity is needed to accelerate the completion of these networks, quickly providing equitable, safe transportation solutions for Americans while promising to deliver billions of dollars each year in revenue and jobs.”

Currently, funding for walking and bicycling facilities comprises less than 2% of the federal surface transportation budget, with limited policy direction to strategically prioritize those funds to fill critical infrastructure gaps and make the active transportation system more effective and efficient. More than 170 national and state organizations—representing interests as far-ranging as biking and walking, health, transportation reform, environment, disability rights, planning and our nation’s local elected officials are joining RTC in calling on Congress to take this opportunity to invest in connecting America’s trails, walking and bicycling infrastructure to create an active transportation system for the country.

Learn more about example trail network projects and RTC’s call for a visionary transportation reauthorization bill at [railstotrails.org/trailstransform](https://railstotrails.org/trailstransform), and follow the commentary on social media using the hashtag #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](https://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.*