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INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy on Senate Transportation Bill: It's Time to Be Bold *Nation's Largest Trails and Active Transportation Organization Expresses Optimism About America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019, but Calls for Focused and Increased Investment in Connected Walking and Biking Infrastructure*

WASHINGTON—Today, in response to the unanimous, bipartisan vote by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to pass America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA) of 2019, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is calling on Congress to consider new and transformative ways to align the nation's surface transportation investment with evolving transportation patterns and needs of Americans.

"This bill [ATIA] gives the active transportation movement much to be optimistic about," said Kevin Mills, RTC's vice president of policy. "The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is demonstrating important leadership by tackling big issues like transportation, safety and climate in a bipartisan way. This bill protects and grows core funding for trails and active transportation, while creating new initiatives that acknowledge issues of connectivity, rising pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, and mode shift."

"At the same time, this bill largely reinforces the status quo—investing the lion's share of funds based on formulas that keep active transportation on the margins despite growing public demand for safe, walkable, bikeable places," said Mills. "Dedicated funding for walking and bicycling infrastructure continues to comprise only about 2% of the surface transportation budget with little policy direction to focus those investments on filling critical infrastructure gaps."

"We are at an opportunity moment. With more than 34,000 miles of multiuse trails on the ground, we should target investments in ways that prioritize connections, weaving together existing active transportation infrastructure into networks that connect within communities and between states—just as our road and rail systems are designed. We are looking to Congress to pass a transformative bill that meets America's diverse and shifting transportation needs," said Mills.

Mills is available for comment about the current iteration of ATIA as well as RTC's vision of a transformative transportation bill that provides an increase in funding dedicated for active transportation, focused on completing trail and active transportation networks. In addition, Congress should build upon thoughtful approaches in this bill to improve implementation of the Transportation Alternatives program, providing the policy direction necessary to ensure that all states invest in safe places to walk and bike.

Learn more about RTC's efforts to inspire a visionary transportation reauthorization bill at railstotrails.org/trailstransform, and follow the commentary on social media using the hashtag #TrailsTransformUS.

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.