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**Tennessee Senate Panel Gives Anti-Trails Bill “Negative” Recommendation**

*Senators vote against legislation that could cost Tennessee money and lives, but bill to move forward; House panel to consider companion bill tomorrow*

**NASHVILLE** – This morning, the Revenue subcommittee of the Tennessee Senate Finance, Ways and Means committee issued its lowest-possible evaluation – a “negative recommendation” – of Senate Bill (SB) 1716, which would prohibit the use of state transportation funds for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure like greenways, trails, bike lanes and sidewalks.

"Bike Walk Tennessee is elated that the Senate Finance subcommittee sided today with thousands of Tennesseans who have spoken up for biking and walking," said Matt Farr, executive director of Bike Walk Tennessee. "We're hopeful that the full Senate committee and the House subcommittee follows suit and opposes this dangerous legislation."

Next, the full Senate Finance, Ways and Means committee will take up SB 1716 by Sen. Todd Gardenhire (R-Chattanooga). Tomorrow, Wednesday, March 2 at noon (CST), the House Transportation subcommittee will consider HB 1650 Rep. Mike Carter (R-Ooltewah). A substitute version of the bill that Rep. Carter is expected to introduce does not solve the fundamental flaws of this legislation.

A groundswell of opposition to SB 1716 and its companion, House Bill (HB) 1650, has risen up across Tennessee. During this morning's hearing, one senator [remarked](#) that SB 1716 was the bill that "has filled up my email inbox." The chairwoman of the House subcommittee considering the bill recently made a similar comment, as well. More than 4,000 Tennesseans have signed [petitions](#) opposing the bill. Bike Walk Tennessee, Livable Memphis, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Trust for Public Land in Chattanooga, and Walk Bike Nashville have joined the leaders of Tennessee's largest cities to oppose it, as well. Yesterday, the *Knoxville News Sentinel* editorial board [came out against the legislation](#).

"Being the Volunteer State, it's gratifying to see how many Tennesseans have volunteered their time to reach out to the legislators in support of bike, pedestrian, and trail facilities," said

Marianne Wesley Fowler, senior strategist of policy advocacy at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “We’re heartened to see that the members of the Senate panel listened to their constituents, and hope that their colleagues in the House will do the same tomorrow.”

If passed, these bills would put Tennesseans’ safety at risk and restrict the ability of communities to decide how to use transportation funds, while potentially costing the state and local governments millions in federal matching funds.

Last year was the deadliest in two decades for bicyclists and pedestrians in Tennessee, with more than 10 percent of fatalities on Tennessee roadways involving a person outside of a motor vehicle. Improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities is a critical way to reduce such tragedies and offer active solutions to curb the state’s obesity and heart disease rates—[some of the highest in the nation](#).

A majority of Tennesseans who walk and bike also drive and, therefore, pay gas taxes that would be diverted away from active-transportation with the passage of the new bills. Additionally, trails and other bike and pedestrian infrastructure can take cars off the road, reducing maintenance costs on Tennessee’s overburdened highway infrastructure and providing an affordable form of transportation with a high return on investment and potential for rural economic development.

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*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization with more than 160,000 members and supporters, is the nation's largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, RTC's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information, visit [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org).*

*Bike Walk Tennessee is a nonprofit organization committed to making Tennessee a great place for people who walk or bike. Founded in 2009, Bike Walk Tennessee advocates for policies and infrastructure that enhance the safety of roads and trails across the state. Bike Walk Tennessee believes that biking and walking create vibrant, healthy communities that contribute to economic development and quality of life. For more information, visit [www.bikewalktn.org](http://www.bikewalktn.org).*