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The INVEST in America Act of 2021 Is a Major Step Forward for Active Transportation

U.S. House of Representatives Committee Passes Bill Doubling Dedicated Funding for Active Transportation, Recognizing Walking and Biking as Essential to Nation's Transportation Future

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) passed the \$547 billion INVEST in America Act of 2021, which includes game-changing provisions for trails, sidewalks and bike lanes across the country.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation's largest trails and active transportation advocacy organization, commends the committee's leadership in putting forth legislation that provides a comprehensive policy approach and the investments necessary to create, connect and maintain trail and active transportation networks—spaces that are essential to safe active transportation and recreation in cities, suburbs and rural areas nationwide.

"Never before has federal law so clearly recognized that active transportation is essential to the success of American communities," said Kevin Mills, RTC's vice president of policy.

"The INVEST Act provides the policy framework needed to deliver transportation choice, ensuring all Americans can safely and conveniently access jobs, transit and essential services regardless of whether they drive. The focus on creating connected active transportation networks is transformative, delivering the focused investment needed to make it practical and safe for more people to walk and bike where they need to go more often—exactly the innovation needed to protect the climate, create jobs and save lives," said Mills.

The INVEST Act doubles dedicated funding for trails, walking and biking from \$850 million per year to \$1.75 billion per year and delivers the policy change necessary to accelerate the completion of connected trail and active transportation systems nationwide.

Notable provisions for walking and biking in the bill include:

- Active Transportation Connectivity Grants, a new program that strategically targets \$250 million per year to create connected walking and biking routes, codifying the Connecting America's Active Transportation System Act (H.R.2991)

- Funding increase of 75% for existing core active transportation programs, Transportation Alternatives and Recreational Trails
- Policy reforms that discourage diversion of funds intended for active transportation projects, most notably by requiring states to run a grant process before transferring funds from Transportation Alternatives to other purposes
- Over \$1 billion in Member Designated Projects (earmarks) that include active transportation elements, most of which are solely for critical active transportation connections. These projects represent over 20% of all earmarks included in the bill, illustrating that demand for significant investments in active transportation far exceeds what is provided by existing federal programs.

Suffused throughout the INVEST Act are plans, accountability mechanisms and grant programs that address the fallout of outmoded transportation policies, like rising rates of pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and injuries, climate emissions, and disparities in transportation options that limit access to jobs and essential services. The INVEST Act includes policy reforms that bring unprecedented focus to the [role of active transportation infrastructure](#) in addressing these issues.

“You can’t achieve the country’s ambitious and critical goals around climate, equity, access and safety without active transportation. This bill recognizes that and prioritizes policies that make walking and biking safe, accessible and equitable. That’s game-changing for our communities and the planet,” said Mills.

“The innovation to strategically invest in connectivity with focused grants beyond the scope of what current programs can deliver is central to the INVEST Act’s success. Rep. Chris Pappas (N.H.-1) and Rep. Jared Huffman (Calif.-2) were essential in delivering this innovation. As this legislation progresses, we will do our part to ensure that its integrity is maintained throughout the transportation reauthorization process,” said Mills.

Currently, funding for walking and bicycling facilities comprises less than 2% of the federal surface transportation budget, and there is limited policy direction to strategically prioritize those funds to fill critical infrastructure gaps and make the active transportation system more effective and efficient. The [package of bills RTC is advocating for in Congress, including the Connecting America’s Active Transportation System Act \(H.R.2991/S.684\)](#), has been championed by hundreds of national, state and local organizations representing interests as far-ranging as biking and walking, health, transportation reform, environment, disability rights, planning and our nation’s local elected officials. 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 #TrailsTransform.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).