



rails-to-trails
conservancy

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U.S. DOT Secretary Confirmation Aligns With “Generational Opportunity” to Make Transformative Investments in Nation’s Transportation Infrastructure

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy calls on Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Congressional leadership to prioritize investments in active transportation as part of strategy to address economic, environmental and equity issues central to transportation infrastructure debate

WASHINGTON—In response to today’s confirmation of U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) calls on the new secretary and Congress to secure greater investment in transportation infrastructure in 2021 with a focus on the potential to build connected walking and biking routes that provide safe, clean, healthy, affordable and equitable transportation systems within and between communities.

“In his tenure as mayor of South Bend and throughout the confirmation process, Secretary Buttigieg has made statements that offer optimism about the priority he will place on bicycling, walking and active transportation infrastructure,” said Kevin Mills, vice president of policy at RTC. “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. We now 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, and unlock billions of dollars for the U.S. economy.”

In [a letter sent to the secretary and Congressional leaders on Jan. 25](#), RTC highlights the significant need for increased investments in connected active-transportation systems:

“Without question, our nation’s transportation system has been strained by rising demand and the ongoing failure to make adequate investments. We recognize that many transportation sectors need increased funding, but a shortage of overall resources must not be allowed to shortchange active transportation investment in the upcoming reauthorization once more. A survey last spring of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy partners identified over \$7 billion in unmet need to fill gaps in active transportation networks. Other organizations have documented billions of additional dollars’ worth of trail and active transportation projects needed to connect people to routine destinations and neighboring communities. In addition to all its noneconomic benefits, active transportation is the most cost-effective way to move people, spur local economic development and create jobs.”

In November, RTC joined PeopleForBikes and partners nationwide to release a transportation agenda for the incoming federal government. Key components of the federal transportation policy agenda include the following:

- 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.
- Reauthorize the FAST Act, and 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 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 related to infrastructure, equity and building for resiliency.

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](#).