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## **Advocates Amplify Indiana Governor’s Call for \$50 Million Investment in Next Level Trails Program**

*The Greenways Foundation of Indiana and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy urge legislature to bolster statewide trail fund to invest in the construction and maintenance needed to advance Indiana’s Visionary Trails System.*

**INDIANAPOLIS**—Trail and active transportation advocates representing business, public health, tourism and conservation led by the Greenways Foundation of Indiana and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) gathered at the Statehouse on March 13 to ask legislators to support Gov. Eric Holcomb’s call for \$50 million to be added to the [Next Level Trails program](#). The program is advancing the state’s [Visionary Trails System](#) to create new economic opportunities and meet growing trail use, which is [69% higher in the Hoosier State than 2019](#).

“Creation of a sustainable trails development and maintenance fund is critical for our state’s continued success to support the transportation and recreational needs of our residents and visitors,” said Mitch Barloga, board president of the Greenways Foundation of Indiana. “Supporting agency capacity to administer state programs is a key success factor to establishing Indiana as a premiere destination for hiking and biking—and unlocking the economic and quality-of-life benefits that trails deliver.”

This funding would bring Indiana’s total investment in walking and biking infrastructure to \$200 million since 2018, and will help bring the Hoosier State closer to achieving the goal shared by Gov. Holcomb and the [Indiana Legislative Trails Caucus](#) to be the first state to complete its segment of the [Great American Rail-Trail®](#), a 3,700-mile developing multiuse trail spearheaded by RTC that will connect the nation between Washington, D.C., and Washington State.

Advocates are also asking state-elected officials to fund a statewide trails economic impact study and marketing plan, which would help secure more federal funding for walking, biking and trail infrastructure and promote active transportation and recreational trail networks such as the Great American Rail-Trail, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail and the 62.3-mile Monon South Trail, the latter of which was recently awarded \$29.5 million. These investments are moving Indiana closer to the goal of all Hoosiers—[currently 94%](#)—being within 5 miles of a trail.

Based on a [recent Indiana University School of Public Health study](#) and [trail counts from the Department of Natural Resources](#), the net economic impact of trails and active transportation annually in Indiana is as much as \$1.6 billion, including direct trail-user spending of \$763 million and health costs avoided of \$844 million—economic benefits that increase exponentially as the connectivity between trails, people and places improves.

“We’re grateful for the leadership of Gov. Holcomb and the Indiana Trails Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Carey Hamilton (D-Indianapolis), Sen. Stacey Donato (R-Logansport), Rep. Michael Karickhoff (R-Kokomo) and Sen. Rodney Pol (D-Chesterton), who are working to meet the increasing demand for trails across the state,” said Brian Housh, RTC’s Midwest policy manager. “Indiana is a national leader, maximizing the economic, health, safety, recreational and quality-of-life benefits that trails bring to our communities.”

*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](http://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*

*The Greenways Foundation is a charitable trust working to promote the growth, enhancement and use of Indiana greenways. To accomplish that, we solicit donations and make grants in support of greenway development, enhancement and operation. We have made it our practice to work closely with both citizen and government entities to establish linear parks in a way that maximizes resources. The Greenways Foundation has become the leading voice for these wonderful public amenities. Learn more at [greenwaysfoundation.org](http://greenwaysfoundation.org).*