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ADVOCATES COLLABORATE WITH LEGISLATORS AND STATE AGENCIES TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE AND DEVELOP OHIO'S STATEWIDE TRAILS NETWORK

The Ohio Trails Partnership and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy urge legislature to support strategic investments to secure more federal funding and agency budget requests that provide capacity to administer trails, walking and biking programs.

COLUMBUS—Trail and active transportation advocates representing business, public health, tourism and conservation led by the Ohio Trails Partnership and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) marked the 6th anniversary of the state's first-of-its-kind Legislative Trails Caucus on March 29 by calling on legislators to strategically invest in the statewide trails system.

"Providing more capacity to our state agencies administering trail programs and facilitating collaboration among those agencies is critical to our success in implementing the Ohio Trails Vision to support the transportation and recreational needs of our residents and visitors," said Steve Walker, board president of the Ohio Trails Partnership. "Supporting agency capacity to administer state programs is key to establishing Ohio as a premiere outdoor recreation destination—and unlocking the economic and quality-of-life benefits that trails deliver."

The Ohio Trails Partnership is working with the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus to elevate the need for an additional trails coordinator at the Department of Natural Resources. In addition, advocates are calling for a statewide trails economic impact study and marketing plan to secure more federal funding to fully capture the economic, health, safety, recreational and other quality-of-life benefits. An additional one-time \$15 million dollar investment in trails request, targeting shovel-ready projects that need technical assistance, is being brought forward as a budget amendment by the trails constituents.

"We're grateful for the Ohio Trails Caucus Co-Chairs Sen. Steve Wilson (R-Maineville) and Rep. Phil Robinson (D-Solon) as well as the other 64 members of the caucus who are working to meet the increasing demand for trails across the state," said Brian Housh, RTC's Midwest policy manager. "Ohio is a national leader, maximizing the economic, health, safety, recreational and quality-of-life benefits that trails bring to our communities."

The Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus was introduced in 2017 and is the nation's first bipartisan group of state legislators collaborating to make smart investments in walking, biking and trail infrastructure to improve quality of life for all residents and visitors. Ohio's Trails Caucus has taken the lead in updating the statewide trails plan, increasing state investments in walking, biking and trails infrastructure, and supporting agencies in their trail-oriented programs.

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](#).