

# California Invests Over a Half-Billion Dollars for Low-Stress Active Transportation Projects

## Analysis of California's Active Transportation Program on Trails, Walking and Biking: 2013–2018

By Laura Cohen and Whitney Ericson

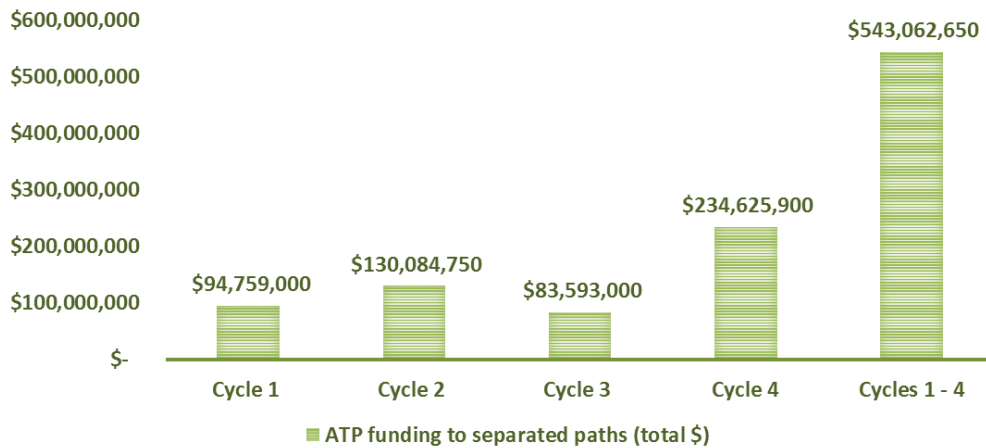
California's Active Transportation Program (ATP) was created in 2013 to increase the safety and mobility of active transportation users and increase bicycling and walking mode shares. Originally funded at \$123 million per year through the merging of several federal and state funding programs, the ATP was increased to \$223 million per year in 2017 when then Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 1, a transportation revenue measure known as the Road Repair and Accountability Act.

Since its inception, the ATP (Cycles 1–4) has funded more than 800 projects and programs, including bicycle paths, trails, bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks, along with biking and walking education and encouragement programs, such as [Safe Routes to School](#). The program prioritizes social equity in its funding decisions, and to date, more than 85% of projects supported by the ATP benefit disadvantaged communities.

Over the last decade, there has been a fast-growing recognition in America of the importance of creating safe, comfortable biking and walking facilities that appeal to all ages and abilities. Research shows that separating bicyclists from traffic—as provided by separated paths and trails, and protected bike lanes—boosts bicycling, improves traffic safety and public health, and provides better and more equitable access to jobs.<sup>1</sup> The “all ages and abilities” criteria—often referred to as creating trails and bike-ped infrastructure for people ages “8 to 80”—has become a national and international best practice.

As we approach Cycle 5 of the ATP, with the call for projects expected to go public on March 26, 2020, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) was interested in assessing the impact of the ATP on creating low-stress bikeways, trails and pedestrian pathways across the state. The impressive results—including over a half-billion dollars allocated to these projects by the ATP since 2014—reflect a growing demand for walking and biking that is safe, comfortable and equitable for all ages, abilities and communities.

### CYCLES 1 - 4: SEPARATED PATH PROJECT FUNDING

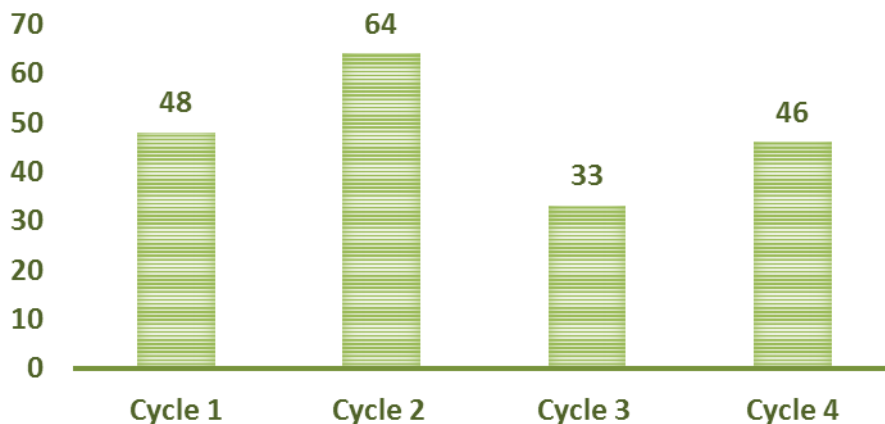


### \$543 Million to Separated Paths: An Analysis of ATP Cycles 1–4

RTC conducted an analysis of funding in the last four cycles, analyzing the proportion of funding going to Class I bikeways (bicycle-only paths), Class IV bikeways (protected bike lanes or cycle tracks), and multiuse paths and trails, which we collectively refer to as “separated paths.” Across Cycles 1–4, **\$543 million was awarded to separated paths, constituting 38%** of the nearly \$1.44 billion programmed by the ATP.

The \$543 million in separated-path funding was awarded to 191 projects, as illustrated in the graph below. While Cycle 2 funded the highest **number** of projects, Cycle 4 allocated the most **funding** by far. This is because the average budget per project in the ATP overall has been increasing each cycle, as communities propose more ambitious, transformative projects.

### TOTAL SEPARATED PATH PROJECTS



For example, in Cycle 4, the City of Moreno Valley was awarded \$2.8 million to help complete its 8-mile section of the larger 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, which will connect many of the city's disadvantaged communities while closing a gap in a developing trail linking Sonora, Mexico, and San Francisco, California. (Read more about Cycle 4 on the TrailBlog: [rtc.li/ATP-Cycle4](http://rtc.li/ATP-Cycle4)).

### **Cycle 1–4 Trends: A Dramatic Increase in Separated-Path Funding**

Separated-path funding as a percent of overall funding has generally been increasing from Cycle 1, which was 26% of total funding. The breakdown over the four cycles is as follows:

- Cycle 1: 26%
- Cycle 2: 36%
- Cycle 3: 32%
- Cycle 4: 51%

The growing popularity of separated paths reflects a strong desire for a low-stress bicycling experience, and this is true across urban, suburban and rural communities.

According to Dr. Torsha Bhattacharya, RTC's director of research, traffic separation and lowering speed limits are key strategies in increasing bicycling rates in America. "The research tells us that over half of Americans surveyed are interested in bicycling more if they could ride on streets with fewer cars or on trails without cars," said Dr. Bhattacharya. "Trails provide maximum separation from traffic thereby increasing the sense of safety among all users, and are an effective strategy to increase biking among traditionally underrepresented groups, including children, seniors and women."

A 2017 study by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) titled "Designing for All Ages & Abilities: Contextual Guidance for High-Comfort Bicycle Facilities," states that "designing streets that are truly safe and inviting for bicyclists of 'All Ages & Abilities'" attracts wide ridership.

The report goes on to document how "All Ages & Abilities Bike Facilities" are safe, equitable and "comfortable":

*Bikeways that provide comfortable, low-stress bicycling conditions can achieve widespread growth in mode share. Among adults in the US, only 6–10% of people generally feel comfortable riding in mixed traffic or painted bike lanes. However, nearly two-thirds of the adult population may be interested in riding more often, given better places to ride, and as many as 81% of those would ride in protected bike lanes. Bikeways that eliminate stress will attract traditionally underrepresented bicyclists, including women, children, and seniors.<sup>2</sup>*

The ATP continues to advance bicycling infrastructure across all facility types, helping to connect individual projects into connected active-transportation networks. Overall, applicants are showing a strong preference for Class I, II and IV bikeways, which provide more separation from traffic than Class III bike routes.

Facility Type	Miles (Cycles 1–4)
<b>Class I Bikeways (Bike/Multiuse Paths)</b>	<b>438</b>
<b>Class II Bikeways (Bike Lanes)</b>	<b>788</b>
<b>Class III Bikeways (Bike Routes)</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Class IV Bikeways (Separated Bikeways/ Protected Bike Lanes)</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Sidewalks</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>Crosswalks</b>	<b>1514</b>

This includes the Santa Cruz Coastal Rail Trail, a 31-mile planned trail that will eventually connect more than 50% of the county’s population to 92 parks and an estimated 44 schools, and help form the spine of the 50-mile Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network. The City of Willits Rail-with-Trail is a smaller but-no-less impactful project that will run 1.6 miles from southern Willits to downtown, connecting schools, a senior center, a hospital and a California Conservation Corp campus in an area where there is currently no nearby bicycle infrastructure.

### Anticipating More Transformative Projects in ATP Cycle 5

As the ATP has evolved, more communities are proposing larger projects for bigger impact. The California Transportation Commission (CTC), which manages the program along with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), has encouraged more “transformational” projects that have the potential to dramatically improve the active transportation environment. By connecting communities with biking and walking networks designed for all ages and abilities, the ATP will continue to create places where all Californians have safe and convenient active-transportation choices.

For more information on the ATP, including the upcoming Cycle 5 call for projects, go to the CTC website: [catc.ca.gov/programs/active-transportation-program](https://catc.ca.gov/programs/active-transportation-program).

<sup>1</sup> National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), *Designing for All Ages & Abilities* (NACTO: New York, 2017), 2, [https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NACTO\\_Designing-for-All-Ages-Abilities.pdf](https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NACTO_Designing-for-All-Ages-Abilities.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.