



Prioritizing A Safer, Connected America

Defining A Surface Transportation Reauthorization Agenda That Invests In Essential Infrastructure

For more than 30 years, America has invested in making it easier to walk and bike, establishing the foundation of the nation's active transportation system. Federal programs dedicated to trails, walking and biking like Transportation Alternatives, the Recreational Trails Program, and, more recently, the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program have provided important policies and investments to move forward regional active transportation plans across the country. These federal investments have contributed significantly to flourishing regional economies and interstate commerce, putting walking and biking infrastructure to work generating new opportunities for mobility and economic development that make America great.

Today, the country's 42,000+ miles of multiuse trails and hundreds of developing trail and active transportation networks reach every single state and generate more than \$34 billion in economic activity annually—36% more each year than the total federal investment in trails, walking and biking over decades. Despite progress towards a more connected active transportation network, existing infrastructure remains far short of what is needed to make it safer and more convenient for American families to walk and bike to the places they need to go.

In 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) revitalized funding for trails and active transportation to align with the robust demand from people across America's landscape, from rural to urban, but there is far more work to be done to meet the nation's needs. **RTC is urging Congress to build on this progress and decades of success in the next reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, following a policy framework that will deliver the active transportation infrastructure America needs.**

1. Invest in Dedicated Active Transportation Programs

This trio of programs is critical to funding the nation's network of trails and other walking and biking infrastructure. Looking ahead, Congress needs to address important funding and policy changes to ensure these programs are able to meet surging demand for this infrastructure nationwide.

Transportation Alternatives

Congress must provide robust funding and support reforms that will ensure these critical dollars make America walkable and bikeable.

This essential program is the nation's largest dedicated federal funding source for trails, walking and biking—RTC's top priority is to grow and strengthen it. To ensure that the funding set-aside for Transportation Alternatives is maximally effective, it needs to be easier for applicants to meet matching fund requirements, and harder to curb transfers of funds to unrelated purposes. What's more, the program can build on successful outcomes from IIJA and encourage larger, highly strategic grants that create safe, connected walking and biking routes to places people need to go.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Congress must grow RTP funding to match relevant tax revenue and to add these resources to the Transportation Alternatives set-aside such that Transportation Alternatives also grows and becomes more secure.

This program has been a vital complement to Transportation Alternatives for more than 30 years. It directs off-road vehicle gas taxes to pay for trails and has been responsible for building and maintaining more than 30,000 trail projects including innumerable nonmotorized trails.

Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)

Congress must commit funding to meet the overwhelming demand for this unique investment in connectivity that maximizes the return on investment possible by leveraging existing trail and active transportation infrastructure into safe, connected walking and biking routes.

ATIIP is the only program dedicated to investing at sufficient scale in projects that connect active transportation networks and spines by filling in multiple infrastructure gaps within and between communities, and across states and regions. This approach accelerates implementation of state, regional and local plans to create safe and convenient walking and biking routes to everyday destinations, which are being pursued in communities of every size and type in all 50 states. The only funding round for ATIIP thus far drew requests for forty times the dollars made available.

2. Strategically Deploy Multi-Modal Federal Discretionary Grants

Congress must provide an impetus for innovation that results from well-defined competitive discretionary programs, including BUILD, SS4A, and the Reconnecting Communities Program. This includes developing a feedback mechanism to incorporate successful ideas into formula programs and preserving and expanding programs that continue to generate new ideas and improved outcomes.

Discretionary grants can catalyze innovation and support critical projects that address limitations of formula programs, such as interstate projects. Under IIJA, trails and other walking and biking infrastructure were eligible under multiple discretionary programs enabling progress of regional active transportation networks across rural, suburban and urban areas. Grant programs like Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD, formerly RAISE), Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A), and the Reconnecting Communities Program align with core federal goals, including reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries and improving mobility and access to economic opportunity. By identifying and supporting new and more effective ways to make transportation safer, more efficient and more impactful, these programs shed light on how larger formula funding programs can improve outcomes.

3. Modernize Formula Programs to Deliver on Goals

Congress should articulate clear goals and provide for accountability in achieving them in order to deliver the transportation system that Americans deserve.

Formula funds distribute the largest share of federal surface transportation funding, yet too often do not deliver on goals set by Congress or the outcomes that Americans want. Such goals and accountability measures will ensure that taxpayer dollars are maximized and that some of the largest and most flexible programs, like Surface Transportation Block Grants, are aligned with America's unmet transportation needs. Goals should include substantially reducing fatalities and serious injuries, including for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, and providing affordable and convenient mobility options for all Americans, including the estimated 30% who do not drive. While states should have flexibility to address their unique needs, Congress should hold states accountable to achieve outcomes by setting performance targets and granting USDOT additional enforcement authority if outcomes are not achieved.

4. Optimizing Programs To Increase Impact

Congress must continue to require USDOT to optimize the efficiency and accountability of programs, reducing barriers to investing in safe and connected active transportation infrastructure.

Too often, outdated guidance and gaps in research create challenges to improving safety and getting the most out of infrastructure investments. Congress has previously required USDOT to take important steps to address these challenges. Reauthorization presents opportunities to make further progress including modernizing the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, codification of the Safe Systems Approach, providing technical assistance in support of accessing grants and project implementation, and improved data to track progress towards goals.