

CHANGEMAKERS FOR TRAILS SERIES

How Federal Transportation Decisions Affect Walking, Biking and Trails

May 15 & 20, 2025



Celebrate Trails Day 2024 in Baltimore | Photo by Quinton Batts

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Opportunity For Generational Impact

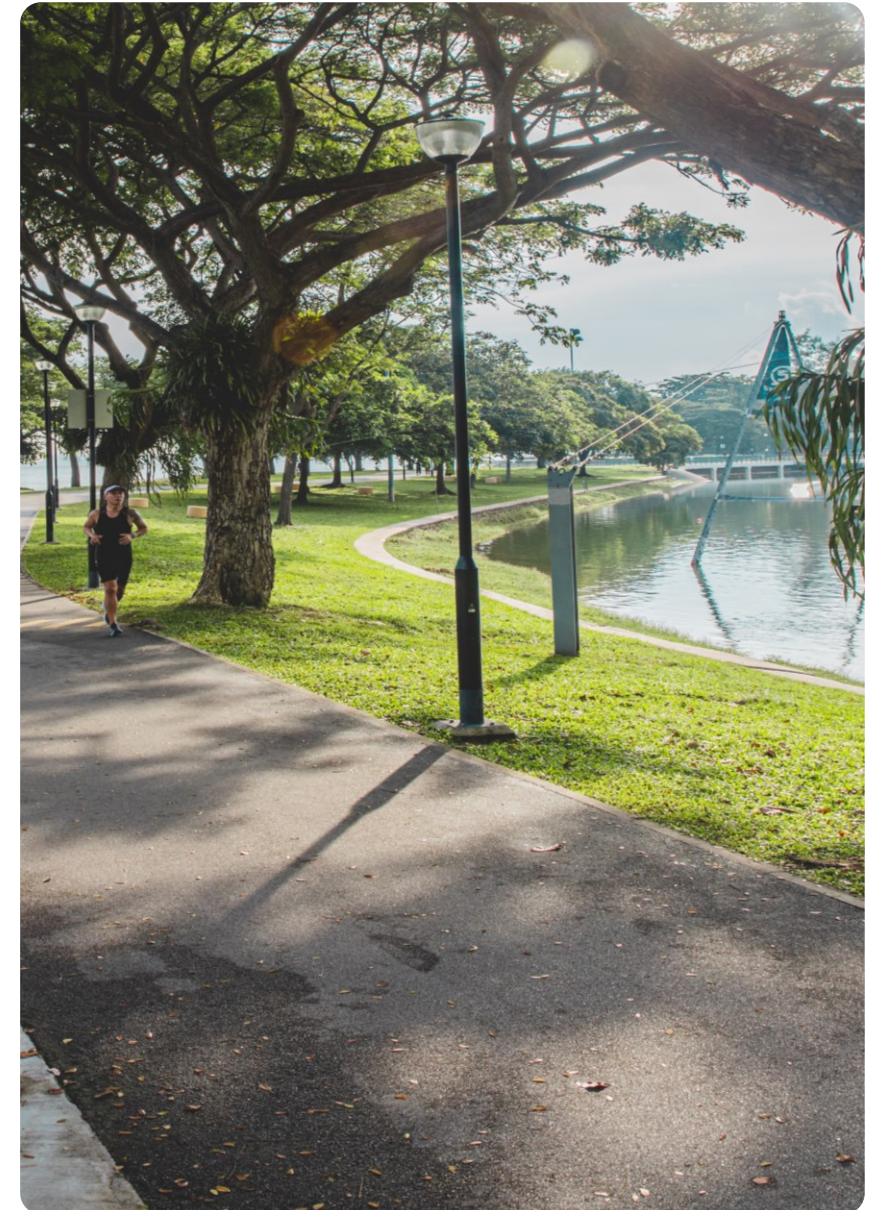
Federal government is largest source of funding for trails, walking and biking—30+ year investment yielded 42,000+ miles of multiuse trails

- A new federal transportation law is passed every 5 years
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is the most recent iteration, doubling funding and investing billions
- Decisions are being made this year that will shape the next federal transportation bill

We continue to navigate a time of uncertainty

- Ongoing threats to existing funding
- Challenges to philosophy of federal funding approach

This is a pivotal moment to influence the priority that federal government places on trails and active transportation—including networks.



Building On Success

Consistent funding moves big projects forward, enhancing safety, connectivity and inclusivity

St. Louis, Missouri: Brickline Greenway

- \$15 million in 2021 from the RAISE program and nearly \$10 million in 2023 from the Reconnecting Communities Program.

Baltimore, Maryland: Safe Streets Success

- In 2023, Baltimore received a \$9 M grant to test several traffic safety recommendations, building on the \$1 million funding from 2022.



Conceptual rendering of the St. Louis Avenue section of the Brickline Greenway | photo courtesy of Green Rivers Greenway

What's At Stake

Meeting Demand and Making Progress

- In recent applications there was one grant for every 40 applications
- Trail networks in development in hundreds of communities and every single state
- Many communities have plans in place but no funding to build or maintain the trail—preventing millions of people from accessing trails

Keeping People Safe

- Every year, thousands are killed walking or biking due to unsafe conditions
- Studies show that bikeable, walkable communities are safer for everyone—including people in cars

Boosting the Economy

- For every \$1 invested in trails, \$1.72 is generated annually from local business revenue, sales tax revenue and benefits related to health and transportation.

RTC's Priorities

- Strengthen and grow the largest sources of federal funds: Transportation Alternatives and the Recreational Trails Program
- Invest in large-scale connectivity through the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)
- Continued support for competitive grants supporting safe and inclusive trails, walking and biking
- Requiring goals, transparency and accountability in grant programs and funding

Read the agenda: railstotrails.org/reauthorization



The Metropolitan Branch Trail, Washington DC

Types of Advocacy

There are different ways to engage with decisions makers and have an impact

- **Everyday advocacy and online engagement:** introducing your network to trails, sharing on social media, telling your story about why trails matter
- **Community advocacy and events on trails:** events and activities where you live, organizing supporters (petitions etc.), attending community meetings
- **Direct advocacy:** attending meetings with elected officials (city council, county meetings, agency discussions); engaging elected officials (local, state and federal); letters to the editor and press



Engaging Your Members of Congress

Our goal: keep this issue top of mind; we need to be louder and persistent!

- Attend Town Halls or other in-district events
- Engage them directly!
 - Invite them to events on the trail
 - Meet with them or their staff in the district (RTC can help!)
 - Give awards!



Congressman Eugene Vindman (D-VA-7) at Great American Rail-Trail event in Washington, D.C.

Local Leaders

Local and state officials carry important influence with Members of Congress, often having direct relationships with district staff.

- Celebrate progress and impact
- Create experiences, invite to events that illustrate demand and benefits
- Meet to discuss active transportation
- Share stories in places they'll see—like letters to the editor in your local paper, local/regional blogs, etc.
- Amplify on social media



Sacramento River District @riverdis... · 17d

Huge thanks to our fellows, Erds and Jerry, and Councilmember Phil Pluckebaum for being part of Trails in Bloom today!

[#trailsday](#) [@railstotrails.org](#)



Birmingham, Alabama



Cuyahoga County, Ohio



Tempe, Arizona



Changemakers Action Plan

This moment is unique, and critical. Here are 3 things you can do to influence how our federal government prioritizes trails, walking and biking in its next transportation bill, which will have lasting implications.

1. Invite your local, state or federal officials to join you out on the trail—AND AMPLIFY IT!
2. Ask your local and state officials to sign RTC's funding pledge: rtc.li/localpledge
3. Meet with your federal representatives or their staff in the district (RTC will help!)



Speakers at a rally for the Rock Island Trail in Missouri | Photo by Brandi Horton

What's Next?

Take Action Today:

- Using social media (tag @railstotrails)
- Letters to the editor and storytelling
- Attend community meetings
- Organize events on the trail
- Meeting with elected officials and leaders

Changemakers for Trails:

- Additional trainings and action touch points this year: July, September, November
- Sign up to be part of the team to attend key meetings with elected officials
- Resources and training tools:
[Railstotrails.org/advocate](https://railstotrails.org/advocate)



Thank You!