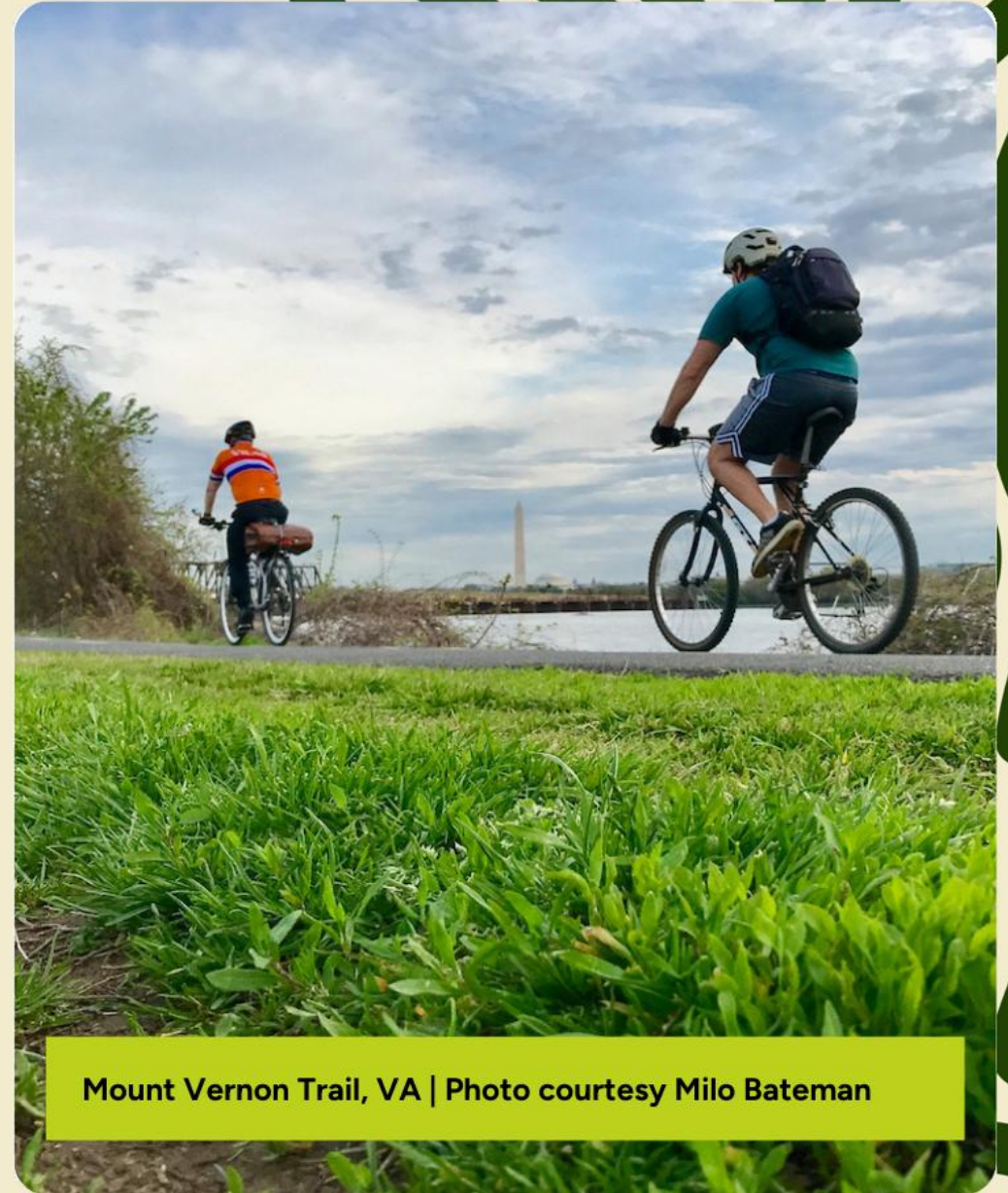


APRIL 9, 2026

# Federal Transportation Bill: What It Means for You and How You Can Make an Impact



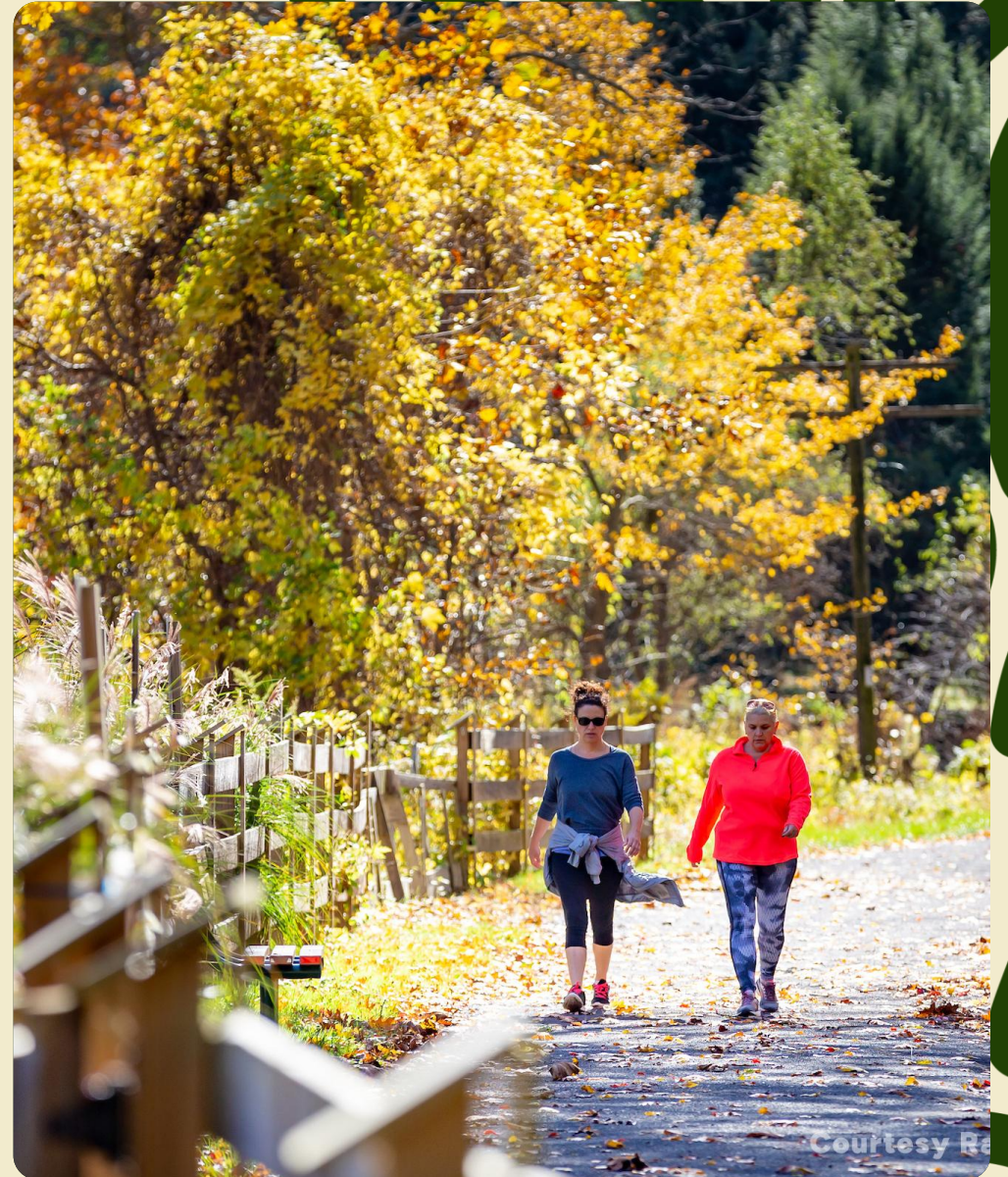
Mount Vernon Trail, VA | Photo courtesy Milo Bateman

# Before we begin:

- Drop your questions in the Q&A box.
- Live transcription is enabled for this webinar.
- Recording and slides will be made available after the webinar.
- In the event you run into technical difficulties during the webinar, here's how to troubleshoot:
  - Log out and back into the webinar
  - Webinar ID: 874 6283 1729
  - Browse Zoom Customer Support topics & contact Customer Support: <https://support.zoom.us>

# Agenda

1. Why Does Transportation Reauthorization Matter
2. Congressional & Administration process and context
3. Timeline: Markup and approval
4. RTC Policy Agenda
5. How To advocate



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# Why Does Reauthorization Matter?

- States implement policies set by Congress
- Provides consistent, baseline funding across all states
- Cycle roughly 5-6 years = few opportunities to shift priorities

# IIJA Showed Why Reauthorization Matters

- 70 Percent INCREASE in Transportation Alternatives funding
- New Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program dedicated to CONNECTIVITY
- Active transportation highly competitive to deliver goals of new and expanded multi-modal programs
- Resources directed to safety of vulnerable road users



# Congressional Process

## *House (one committee sets most policy)*

- Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) – policy for all modes of travel
  - Chairman: Sam Graves (R-MO)
  - Ranking Member: Rick Larsen (D-WA)
- Ways and Means – funding

## *Senate (3 committees set policy)*

- Environment and Public Works (EPW) trails and highways
  - Chair: Shelly Moore Capito (R-WV)
  - Ranking Member: Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)
- Commerce, Science, & Transportation –discretionary programs and vehicles
- Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs – Public transit
- Finance – funding

# Contrasting Policy Themes

Last reauthorization (IIJA, 2021) aimed to address growing needs:

- Invest in climate, safety, and equity
- Foster multi-modal transportation with more mobility options
- Initiate new programs & larger direct federal role (but formula still dominates)

**Committee Chairs now aim to go *back to the future*:**

- Give \$ to states with flexibility (without accountability)
- Re-emphasize building highways
- Project 2025: walking and biking not the federal role (devolution)
- Consolidate programs (TA and RTP were in 2012)

# Threats to Active Transportation

- Congress
  - Committee chairs support providing states with more flexibility, consolidating or eliminating programs that support biking and walking
  - Chairman Graves stated the next law will not include funding for bike and walking paths
  - Chair Capito has opposed the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program
  - Supporters of active transportation may not make it a priority
- The Administration
  - Grant cancellations, delays, and modifications
  - Language – “hostile to motor vehicles,” “traditional highway bill,” etc.
  - Signals to Congress – controlled by the same party – about priorities.

# Timeline

- Infrastructure Investment And Jobs Act (IIJA, current law) expires on September 30, 2026
  - Congress must pass a new law or extend IIJA (extensions are common)
- House Transportation Committee will markup (vote) first - April/May 2026 is possible
- Senate EPW Committee markup in late spring/summer 2026
- What happens next is unknown
  - Disagreement between House and Senate likely on policy
  - Uncertainty about how to fund any new law (highway trust fund is insolvent)
  - Limited time remaining on the Congressional calendar and mid term elections are soon
  - Transportation is not a priority for either chamber or the Administration

# Engagement Matters Now

- What Congress writes today, will be the start of negotiations tomorrow
- Committees will consider and vote on policies even if a new law is not finalized.
- What the committees approve will be the foundation for negotiations in the future
- This has happened before - current law (IIJA) largely written years prior

**Essential to make our voices heard now and show support for the programs that support trails, biking and walking**



# RTC's Reauthorization Agenda

1. Improve *dedicated* trail, walk/bike programs
  - **Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside**
    - *Improve and strengthen largest dedicated federal funding source*
  - **Recreational Trails Program**
    - *Grow to match fuel tax receipts from off-road trail users, and add these resources to the set aside so that both RTP and TA grow*
  - **Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program**
    - *Commit highway trust fund contract authority of \$250 million/year*

# RTC's Reauthorization Agenda Cont...

## 2. Federal Multi-Modal Grants

- *Continue multi-modal discretionary grants and use these programs to inform and catalyze ongoing innovation in formula programs*
- *BUILD (RAISE), Safe Streets and Roads for All, and Reconnecting Communities support critical projects that formula programs often fail to prioritize*

## 3. Hold states accountable to federal goals (e.g., safety)

Visit [www.railstotrails.org/reauthorization](http://www.railstotrails.org/reauthorization) for more.

# RTC's Reauthorization Tactics

- Release policy agenda: <http://railstotrails.org/reauthorization>
- Meet with Member and committee staff; help develop and advocate for legislative proposals
- Build consensus & collaborate with partners – letter to Congress signed by over 1100 organizations, business & local elected officials
- Engaged local, state and national allies to amplify requests - local sign on letters to key committee members; influential individuals meet members
- Cultivate grassroots engagement nationwide and in key states and districts
- Engage media to uplift issues and themes that can shape political optics

# Opportunities for Advocacy

- The time is now to meet with Members of Congress
- Officials hear about many issues and your voice is needed to keep trails, walking and biking top of mind for officials
- RTC is here to help partner with you to make these meetings happen



# Events on Trails

**Engage elected officials on the trail:** Invite decision-makers to experience the impact of trails in their community, building more support for your projects.

**Encourage officials to use infrastructure:** Ex: Bike with the Mayor events and impact of using trails themselves

**Connecting with leaders on the need for continued funding:** after experiencing trails firsthand, there is a unique opening to connect this to needed funding and investments



*Historic Battlefield Trail, Texas | Photo by Brandi Horton*

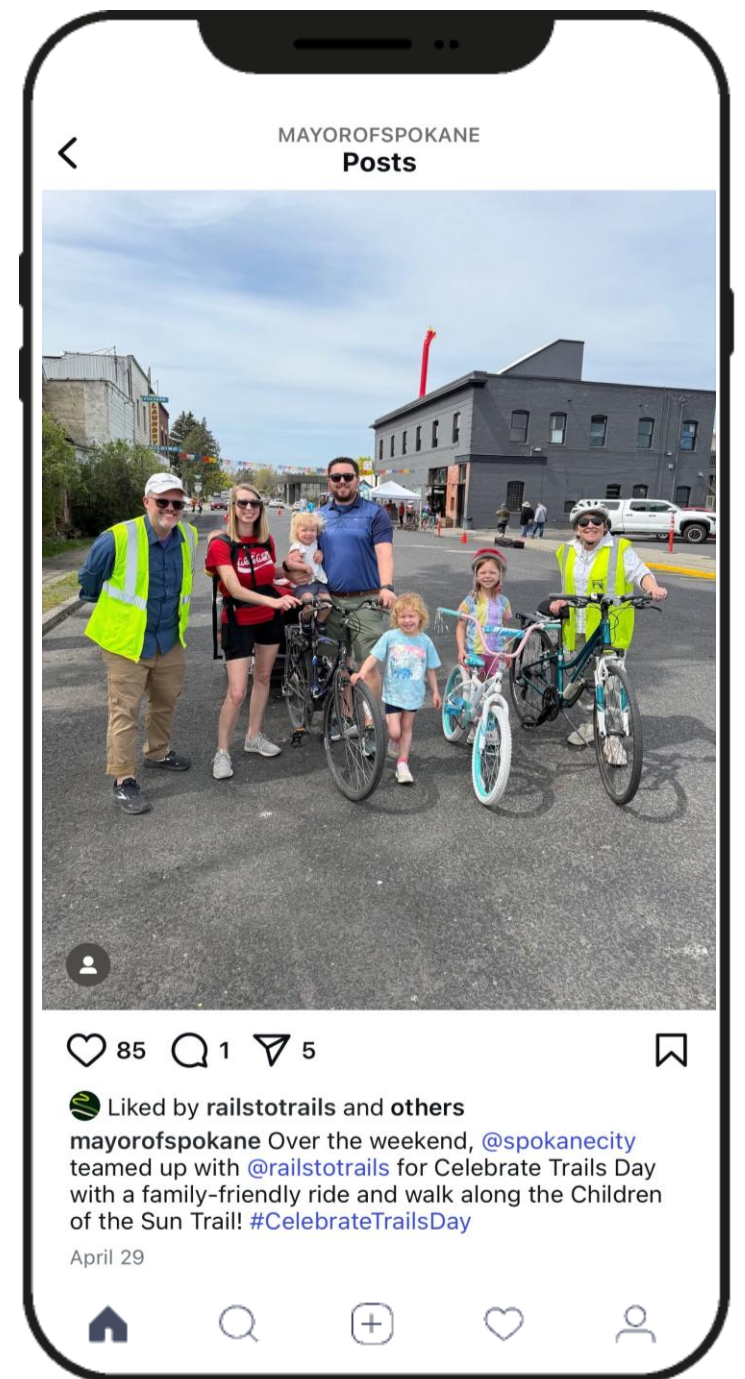
# Tell Your Representatives you Support Active Transportation Funding



# Engaging Local Leaders for Federal Impact

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



# Messaging: Trails are Essential Infrastructure

## Meeting Demand and Making Progress

- Overwhelming demand: ATIP oversubscribed with \$40 requested for every \$1 available
- Regional trail and active transportation networks in development in hundreds of communities and every single state but many have no funding to build or maintain the trail

## 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.
- The real economic impact—the country's trail system already generates more than \$34 billion in economic activity annually and can more than quadruple as trail systems are connected.

# Action Plan

Here are immediate actions you can take to impact reauthorization

1. Contact your Member of Congress and tell them why trails matter to your community
2. Invite your local, state or federal officials and staff to join you out on the trail—AND AMPLIFY IT!
3. Engage agency contacts (DOTs, tourism, health, etc.) to share the urgent need to advocate and demonstrate far-reaching support for active transportation networks
4. Be Persistent: Congressional committees will soon act and RTC will advise you on what it means and what you need to do.



Rally for the Rock Island Trail in Missouri

# Upcoming RTC Events and Opportunities

**Wednesday, April 22: Trails as Social Infrastructure:  
Practical Strategies to Build Connection in a  
Disconnected World (1.0 AICP CM)**

**Saturday, April 25: Celebrate Trails Day**

**Wednesday, May 13: E-bikes, E-motos and Safety:  
What Belongs on Trails? (1.0 AICP CM)**

**Host the Next TrailNation Summit: Proposals due  
by 11:59 EDT on May 8, 2026**



# Q&A