

# FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAILS: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### NRPA POLICY POSITION

- Reauthorize surface transportation programs (MAP-21) that enhance dedicated funding for biking and walking.
- Ensure that efforts to use Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenue as a means of paying for transportation infrastructure do not divert funding from LWCF.

### BACKGROUND

Transportation connections to public lands and parks have been an essential component of transportation policy and planning for more than three decades. Public open areas (including recreational trails, parks, and green spaces) are considered essential to attract and retain a diverse, vibrant, and economically healthy community.

During the last 20 years, dedicated funding for trails, bicycle and pedestrian programs has: added more dollars to local economies; enhanced our safety, health and quality of life; and, contributed to the renaissance of our cities and towns by attracting new residents, employers, and fostering a new kind of tourism.

Since 1992, funding for biking and pedestrian projects has been provided through three main transportation programs: 1) the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Transportation Enhancements (TE), and 3) the Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS) with dedicated funding provided for each. Additionally, the former transportation law, required states to provide a specified amount of their federal surface transportation dollars to bike and pedestrian projects through the TE program – making the TE program the single biggest source of funding for bike and pedestrian projects.

### Funding For Bike and Pedestrian Projects Under MAP-21

In 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law and significantly changed the way in which funding is provided for these projects.

- MAP-21 eliminated the TE and SRTS as dedicated funding programs and consolidated them, along with many others, under the new Transportation Alternatives program (TAP);
- Overall funding for TAP is 33% less than the funding previously provided for the TE and SRTS programs;
- While bike and pedestrian projects remain eligible for funding under TAP, they must compete with expensive ventures, including boulevard construction and environmental mitigation for limited TAP funding; and
- MAP-21 eliminated the required spending on bike and pedestrian projects, and states now have broad discretion regarding whether to fund these projects and may opt-out of using surface transportation funding for these types of projects.

### WHY CONGRESS SHOULD ACT

Available funding for bike and pedestrian projects has gone from \$1.2 billion to approximately \$800 million, and this funding is no longer specifically dedicated to bike and pedestrian projects. Not only is there less funding, there is increased competition for the funding as various types of projects are now eligible to receive it. Limited funding and increased competition combined with the fact that states are no longer required to fund bike and pedestrian projects, threatens the number of bike and pedestrian projects that will be built.

During the reauthorization process elimination of funding for TE, RTP and the SRTS programs

was seriously considered. Given the concern over how to fund the next surface transportation bill and the general climate favoring reduced spending, we will likely see another attempt to eliminate or significantly reduce funding for bike and pedestrian projects.

With revenue from the federal gasoline tax no longer sufficient to ensure the long-term solvency of the “Highway Trust Fund,” there is great divide over how to pay for the next transportation bill, and proposals include using billions of dollars in revenue from oil and gas leases in the OCS. This puts funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at risk since it is also funded by OCS leases.



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### ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TRAILS:

- **Biking and walking make up 12 percent of all trips in the US** – even as funding for biking and walking projects historically accounts for less than two percent of the federal transportation budget. This represents more than four billion bicycle trips and 40 billion walking trips a year. Cities that invest in bicycle and pedestrian projects turn downtowns into destinations, and capitalize on increased business activity.
- **These projects create jobs and build local economies.** A recent study from the Political Economy Research Institute at UMass – Amherst revealed that building bike lanes and other trail infrastructure creates 46% more jobs than building road-only projects for every one million dollars spent.
- **Protecting our environment.** Trails play a vital role in decreasing the levels of CO2 emissions released into the atmosphere enabling people to experience wildlife habitat with minimal impacts. Trails also promote conservation education by giving people a place to observe nature without harming the natural environment.

### IMPROVING HEALTH, SAFETY & LIVABILITY IN COMMUNITIES:

- Today, one third of Americans are considered obese and overweight. Studies indicate that community-based prevention strategies, such as the availability of sidewalks, bike paths, and hiking trails, which promote physical activity, are among the most effective means of combating obesity and chronic disease:
- According to a study published in Health Promotion Practices, every dollar invested in the construction of public walking and biking trails results in nearly \$3 in medical cost savings.
  - Multiple studies reviewed in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* show that the creation of, or enhanced access to, places for physical activity combined with informational outreach produces a 48.4% increase in frequency of physical activity.
  - According to the National Household Transportation Survey, roughly 40% of all trips in metropolitan areas are two-miles or less in length. The majority of these trips can be taken on foot or bicycle but are still taken primarily by car due to disjointed land-use patterns, poor infrastructure design, and limited connectivity.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit the Advocacy pages of the NRPA website at: [www.NRPA.org/getinvolved](http://www.NRPA.org/getinvolved)