

PARKS AND TRAILS ARE ESSENTIAL TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

OVERVIEW:

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recognizes transportation connections to public lands and parks have been an essential component of transportation policy and planning for more than three decades. In recent years, the need for connecting people to green space, trails, and recreation opportunities has become even more important due to:

- A growing obesity epidemic, one-third of the Americans are considered obese or overweight.
- Congestion and pollution from poor transportation options, lack of funding, and inadequate transportation planning, is affecting the physical health of people and economic health.
- The positive effects that trails and active transportation systems and greenways have on communities.
- The benefits of building trails and pathways include reduced health care costs, better social equity, increased physical activity, lower traffic congestion, and increased tax revenues.

The National Recreation and Park Association calls on Congress to maintain funding for active transportation that connects communities to parks and public lands. NRPA requests Congress to maintain current levels of funding for:

- Transportation Enhancements Program
- Recreational Trails program
- Safe Routes to School Program
- Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Education Trust Fund (formerly Wallops-Breaux Act)

Providing the public with transportation options and continuing to maintain current levels of funding will improve health, provide economic benefit, and improve quality of life in all communities.



NRPA PRIORITIES:

- Fight to Include parks and recreation resources in all transportation programs that promote livable, sustainable communities
- Maintain the current federal investment in alternative and active transportation systems, while lobbying to support initiatives that meet the environmental, economic, and health challenges faced by our nation today.
- Lobby for more funding and support for the Transportation Enhancements Program, the Recreational Trails Program, the Safe Routes to School Program, the Sport Fishing Restoration and Boating Safety Trust Fund (Wallops-Breaux).

IMPROVING HEALTH IN COMMUNITIES:

- The prevalence of adult obesity in the United States has more than doubled since 1980. The increase is even more severe among children and teens. Studies show that community-based prevention activities (such as improving recreation infrastructure) are among the most effective means of combating obesity and chronic disease.
- In a study published by the CDC, creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity led to a 25.6 percent increase in the number of people exercising three or more days per week.



- A group of studies reviewed in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* show that creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach produces a 48.4 percent increase in frequency of physical activity.
- According to a study published in *Health Promotion Practices*, every dollar invested in construction of bike-ped trails results in nearly \$3 in medical cost savings. A study by the Rand Corporation shows that every mile a person walks or runs will save at least 24 cents per mile in medical and other costs.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TRAILS:

- A National Park Service study reveals that economic impact of a trail is realized through newly created trail-related jobs and expansion of existing businesses surrounding travel, equipment, clothes, food, souvenirs, and maps.
- A Department of Transportation interim report on Non-motorized Transportation surveyed four communities and found they reduce total vehicle-miles traveled by an estimated 156.1 million miles over the course of a year, saving more than \$23 million in fuel costs, and reducing 67,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions.
- A study by the Political Economy Research Institute in 2010 shows that bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure projects create a greater number of jobs per \$1 million in spending than road infrastructure jobs.

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, and promote conservation education.
- According to the *National Household Transportation Survey*, roughly 40 percent 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.
- A report released by the Federal Highway Administration entitled, *Benefits of Bicycling and Walking to Health*, reports that families who walk two miles a day instead of driving will, in one year, prevent 730 pounds of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.
- A report by the Rails to Trails Conservancy illustrates that the volume of decreased auto travel is equivalent to cutting oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles by 3 percent (modest scenario) to 8 percent (substantial scenario).

For more information, visit the Advocacy pages of the NRPA website at www.NRPA.org/getinvolved.

