

DECEMBER 9, 2024

# Advocating for a High-Performing Transportation Alternatives Program



Razorback Regional Greenway | Photo courtesy  
Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway Alliance

# Today's Tools

## **In the event you run into technical difficulties, here's how to troubleshoot:**

- Log out and back into the webinar
- Listen by phone: 301 715 8592; meeting ID: 838 2521 1480
- Browse Zoom Customer Support topics & contact Customer Support: <https://support.zoom.us>
- Use the chat box to interact with attendees and the Q&A box to pose questions to the panelists.
  - Please drop your name, state, and affiliated organization in the chat!

Ex. Yvonne Mwangi, D.C., Rails to Trails Conservancy

- Please remember to MUTE yourself to minimize distractions for others.
- CLOSED CAPTIONING is enabled. Click the "CC" box at the bottom of your screen to utilize this tool.

Today's Speakers

# Today's Speakers



Kim Chesser, State Agency  
Advocacy Specialist, RTC



Kevin Mills, VP of  
Public Policy, RTC



Kirsten Finn, Executive  
Director, Wisconsin Bike Fed



# Agenda

- Opportunity to accelerate progress on trail/active transportation networks
- Key reforms in TA implementation
- RTC's data and resources to assist advocates
  - TrADE: 32 years of tracking state implementation
- Implementation best practices
- Wisconsin Bike Fed efforts

# Dedicated Active Transportation Funding Opportunities

Provide stable funding in times of political uncertainty

- Transportation Alternatives (state and local)
  - Nation's largest source of active transportation funding (nearly \$1.5 billion/year)
- Recreational Trails (state)
- Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (fed)



Indiana's Governor Eric Holcomb on the Big-4 Rail Trail

# Key Transportation Alternatives Reforms in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

More money for active transportation:

- Average of 70% increase in funding
- Restrictions on transferring funds for unrelated purposes
- Opportunity for larger, more strategic grants for connectivity

More equitable access to funding:

- Up to 5% of total funds can be used for technical assistance
- Change to match requirement

Trail maintenance eligible use

# Securing policy reforms for your state or region

- Build relationships with key agency players
- Engage in development of guidelines & scoring criteria – impact project priorities
- Influence plans: transportation, safety, trail/AT
- Provide vision (connectivity)
- Document impact/return on investment



# Transportation Alternatives Program

- FHWA allocates funding to states, and state DOTs and MPOs administer the program
- Funding is for variety of transportation and community improvements; vast majority awarded to walking and biking infrastructure
- Starting in 2022 and continuing through 2026, the annual funding slowly grows each year from approximately \$1.38 billion to \$1.5 billion
- Projects significantly benefit local economies
- Each state must develop a competitive process to allow eligible entities to submit projects for funding
- [Transportation Alternatives \(TA\) - Rails to Trails Conservancy | Rails to Trails Conservancy](#)



# Key questions for states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs):

- How equitably is it distributed?
- How well are they 'obligating' the money?
- How strategic and impactful are the projects funded?

**Effective, Accountable, Implementation**

# Example of TA Reform: Texas

- **Regional Fund Allocation**  
Balanced funding for urban and rural areas.
- **Simplified Application:** Easier access for smaller communities.
- **Project Readiness Focus:**  
Prioritized ready-to-start projects.
- **Local Control:** MPOs gained more project selection power.
- **Large Scale Project Category:**  
more opportunities for connectivity

## Outcomes:

- More projects in rural areas.
- Improved pedestrian/ bike infrastructure.
- A model for other states.

# Example of TA Reform: Ohio

## Ohio Safety Funding and Carbon Reduction Funding Coordinated with the Transportation Alternatives Program

Transportation Alternatives Program funding applications are reviewed for eligibility for safety funding and Carbon Reduction Funding.

If warranted, a project could be awarded Safety funding in addition to TAP funding.

Eligible CRP projects also receive safety funds to provide the 20% local match for these projects as well meaning the Construction Contract and Construction Engineering phases of the project will be 100% Federally funded.



OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL | PHOTO BY ERIC OBERG, COURTESY RTC

# Transportation Alternatives Data Exchange (TrADE)

- Learn about TA
- Read the Spending Report
- Explore state profiles
- Find project lists



# Transportation Alternatives Spending Report FY 1992-2023



Helps stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels understand and make effective use of the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) program

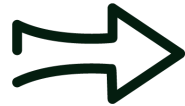


Helps stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels understand and make effective use of the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) program

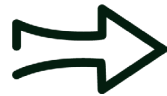


Data Sources: FHWA's Financial Management Information System (FMIS) and RTC's direct data requests to state department of transportation (DOT) staff.

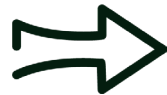
# Why TRADE?



Cumulative data as well as annual data



More specific data than what is collected annually by FHWA



In depth analysis of data and commentary on best practices

# Resources and Tools

## Technical Assistance

## Web Resources

- [TrADE Report](#)
- [Federal Funding Resources](#) - Federal funding page, federal funding tool, *Inside Track* newsletter
- [Webinars & online dialogues](#)
- [TrailNation Playbook](#)
- [Trail-Building Toolbox](#) – basic information on how to build a trail
- [Resource Library](#) – digital repository



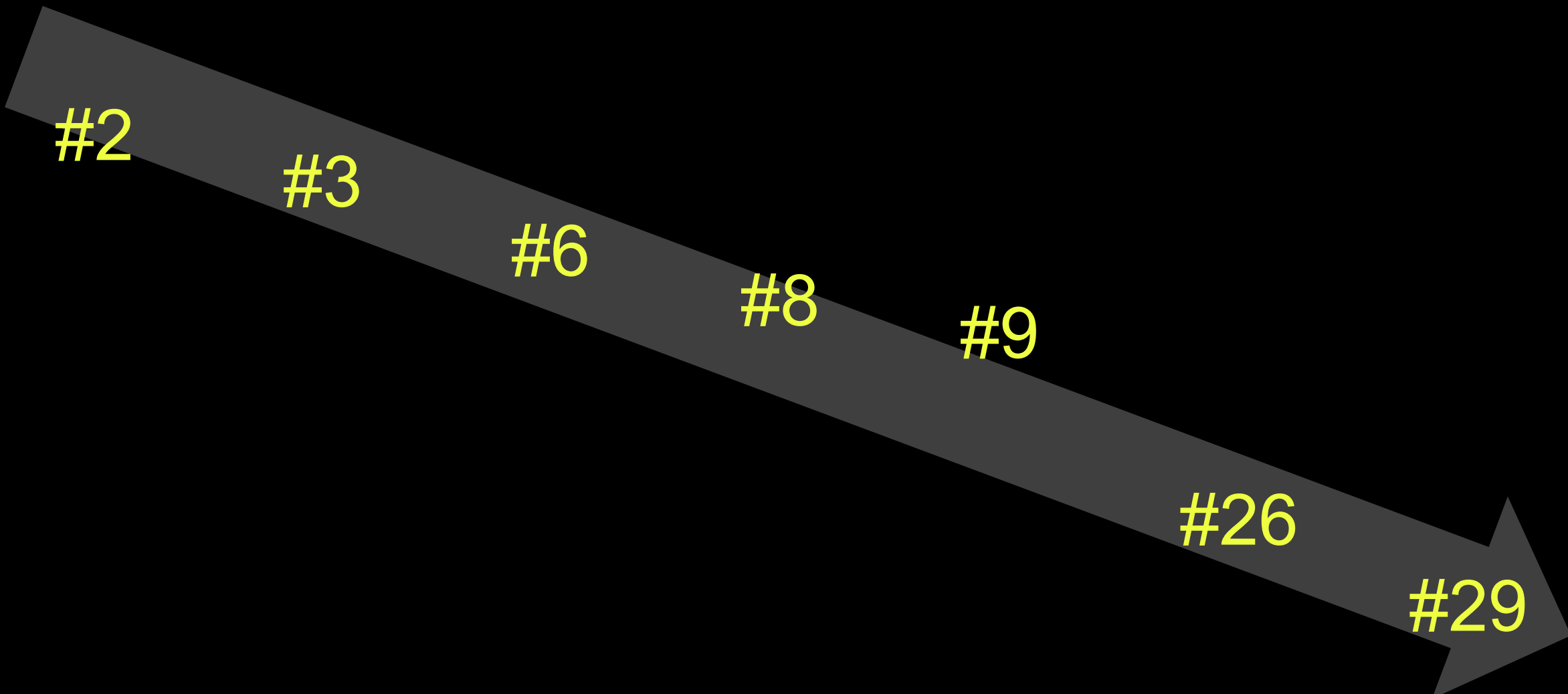
Kirsten Finn, Executive Director





2010

Wisconsin ranked #2 in the nation



#2

#3

#6

#8

#9

#26

#29

2010

2011

2012

2013

2015

2017

2022

Complete Streets  
eliminated

Eminent domain  
revoked

2.2

On average, states spend 2.2% of federal transportation dollars on biking and walking initiatives.

0.6

Wisconsin spends 0.6%.

49

Wisconsin is ranked #49 in per capita spending on cycling infrastructure.

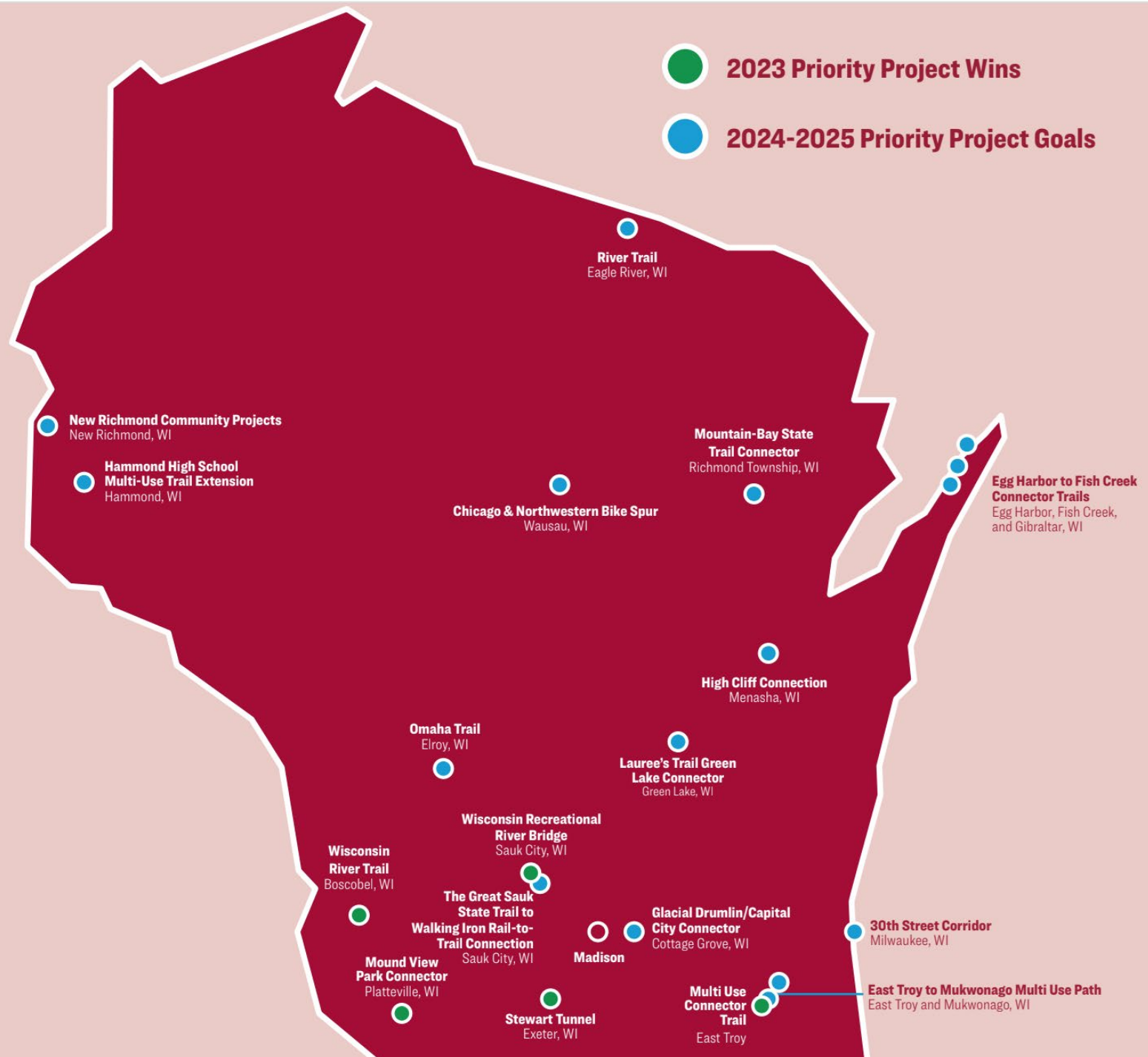


Cycling generates \$1.4 BILLION in economic activity annually in Wisconsin.

From 2014 - 2021, Wisconsin only obligated about \$7,400,000 in TA funds annually to cycling projects.

In 2022 and 2023, that number increased to \$19,393,273.

- 2023 Priority Project Wins
- 2024-2025 Priority Project Goals



- ❖ In 2022, Bike Fed Establishes the Council of Advocates
- ❖ Council Helps Identify Priority Projects Across the State
- ❖ 2023 Bike Fed Starts Offering Technical Assistance To Access Federal Funding

BUT, according to RTC's TrADE Data,  
Wisconsin had \$67 million in  
untapped TAP

## THE PLAN

- ❖ Engaged a Powerful Partner
- ❖ Leaned in on Economic Impact
- ❖ Leveraged Trust Built With WisDOT
- ❖ Came Prepared With Priority Project List

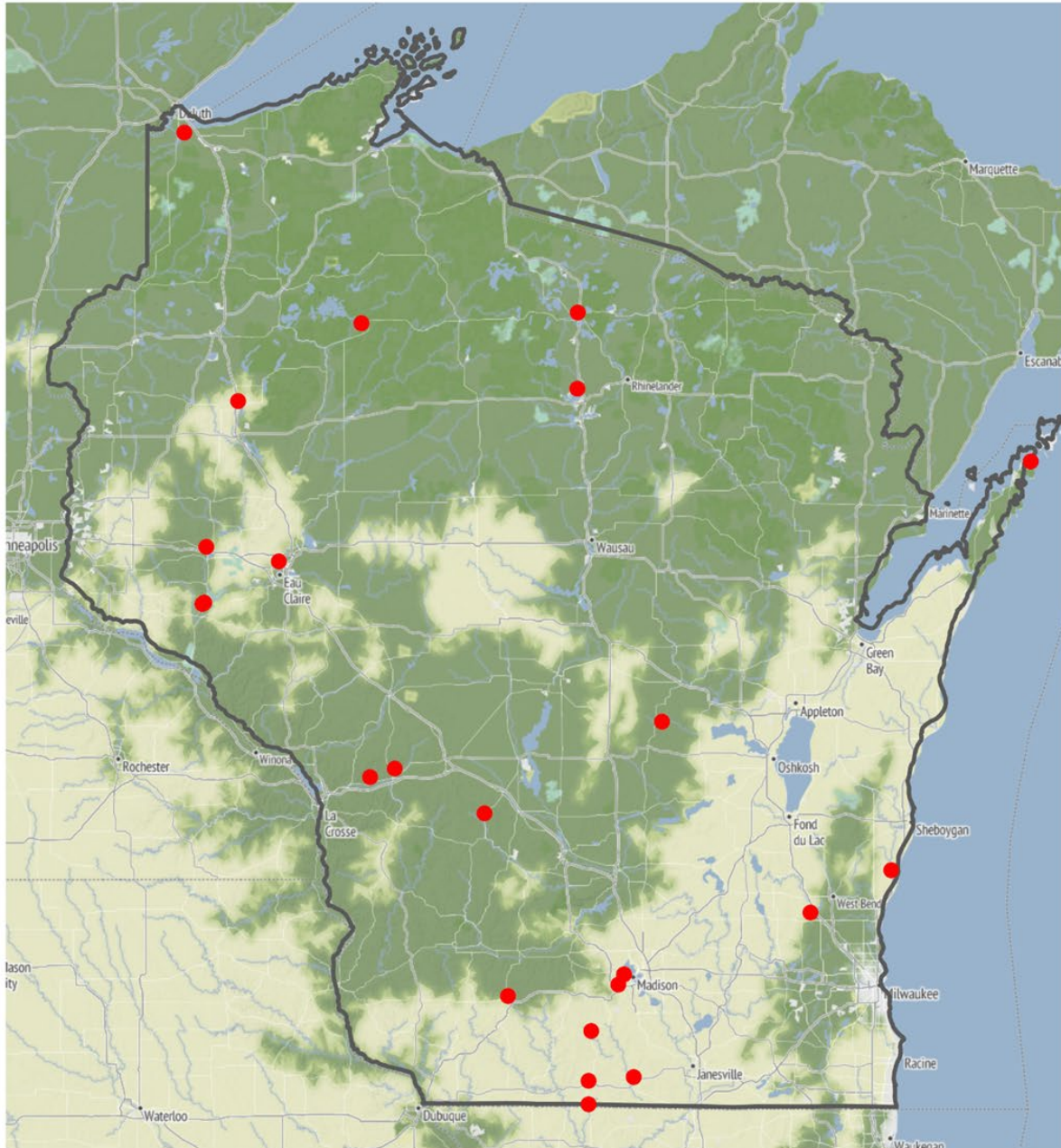


# \$44 MILLION IN FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION FUNDS!

For Transportation Alternatives,  
Carbon Reduction and  
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement



Coming in 2025!



\$14 million  
Additional Dollars  
to DNR for  
Recreational Trails  
Program to  
address deferred  
maintenance on  
state trails.

# **Poll: What is the biggest obstacle in your state to effective implementation of the Transportation Alternatives program?**

- Our state DOT has other priorities
- It is hard to secure matching funds
- Communities struggle to submit applications
- Grants are too small to achieve our goals
- Other

# Breakout Rooms

- What is your initial reaction to the poll results? Do you agree with the top obstacles? Did anything surprise you?
- What reform efforts have been successful in the past? What would you like to see reformed in the future?
- What resources do you need to successfully advocate for an improved TA program?



# **Takeaways & Audience Q&A**

# Resources and Tools

## Technical Assistance

## Web Resources

- [TrADE Report](#)
- [Federal Funding Resources](#) - Federal funding page, federal funding tool, *Inside Track* newsletter
- [Webinars & online dialogues](#)
- [TrailNation Playbook](#)
- [Trail-Building Toolbox](#) – basic information on how to build a trail
- [Resource Library](#) – digital repository