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USDOT Grants Prioritize Projects That Address Soaring Demand for Safe, Connected Regional Walking and Biking Routes

Rails to Trails Conservancy says multi-year outcomes of RAISE and other federal multimodal programs demonstrate the need for permanent funding to complete America's trail and active transportation networks

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent round of grant announcements once again elevates the real impact that connected regional walking and biking routes bring to Americans everyday, says [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#), the nation's largest trails, walking and biking advocacy organization.

"When each round of federal multimodal transportation grants opens, we consistently see exceptional demand for investments in trails, walking and biking," said Kevin Mills, RTC's vice president of policy. "The promise of these investments is incredible—the country's trail system already generates more than [\\$34 billion in economic activity](#) annually. As we further connect our trails and active transportation infrastructure, the economic impact of active transportation could more than quadruple each year, all while making our communities safer to navigate and great places to live."

Federal investments made under the [RAISE](#) and [Reconnecting Communities Programs](#) illustrate the breadth of demand for trail and active transportation networks, and the opportunity that rural, suburban and urban communities see in leveraging this infrastructure to improve mobility while fueling the economy and delivering quality of life. Over the past four years, USDOT has awarded \$9.5 billion under the RAISE and RCP programs. 70% of grant awards have invested in projects that contribute at least in part to walking, biking and trail infrastructure, according to RTC's analysis.

Last week, USDOT announced [\\$1.3 billion in RAISE grants](#) and [\\$544.6 million in Reconnecting Communities Program](#) grants. More than 3/4 of the projects announced address the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, according to an analysis by RTC. Twenty percent of funding awarded under both programs—more than \$362.3 million—went to projects that exclusively focus on trails and other walking and biking infrastructure, including trail and active transportation networks.

For example, in rural **West Virginia**, \$20.8 million will build 6.2 miles of multiuse trail in Martinsburg, creating new active transportation connections to transit and downtown residential neighborhoods. In **Nebraska**, \$2 million will support planning for an extension of the Cowboy Trail into downtown Norfolk, making it safer for residents to get around the community and tapping

into the trail tourism potential of the [Great American Rail-Trail®](#), RTC's signature project to connect 3,700 miles across the country that could generate more than \$14.5 million annually in visitor spending alone for the state. In **Montana**, \$6 million will advance planning for projects that will help connect the Great American Rail-Trail along the route spanning from the Montana-Idaho border to the Continental Divide. In **Hot Springs, Arkansas**, \$2.4 million will support planning to expand the area's trail network so residents can safely get to important destinations within the community.

Several awards underscore the important role of trails in community revitalization. \$2 million will be invested in a planning study in **Pennsylvania**, assessing the opportunity to leverage the underutilized Richmond Industrial Track for safe walking and biking access in the Kensington area of Philadelphia, which is part of the developing [Circuit Trails network](#). In **Wisconsin**, \$1.6 million will be invested in a study to plan a 7.2-mile trail alongside an active rail line that is at the heart of Milwaukee's 30th Street Corridor to create new mobility for residents, which is part of the [Route of the Badger](#) trail network serving southeast Wisconsin. Both projects are part of [RTC's TrailNation™ portfolio](#).

"Connecting communities with safe walking and biking infrastructure isn't just about getting from point A to point B—it's about creating healthier, safer and more vibrant places to live. The overwhelming demand for this funding shows how much Americans value active transportation, and it's time we fully invest in making it a reality for everyone," said Mills.

More than [150 trail and active transportation networks](#) are being developed nationwide, with at least one in every single state—half of Americans live in a community where an active transportation network is being built. Communities need sizeable grants and dedicated funding opportunities to move these projects forward and realize the economic, mobility, health and safety benefits they offer. Current discretionary and dedicated federal programs deliver significant investments for trails, walking and biking, but many communities will not achieve their infrastructure goals without reliable funding at sufficient scale that is focused on active transportation.

The [Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program](#), which also announced its [inaugural funding round](#) last week, is an innovative new program that can provide significant investments to ensure consistent progress that meets the far-reaching impact and demand of the nation's active transportation networks. It is the only federal program to provide dedicated funding for the planning and construction of safe and connected active-transportation networks and long-distance spine trails. The program has been authorized by Congress, with funding dependent on annual appropriations. RTC, Congressional champions and partners across the country are continuing to advocate for full program funding.

Rails to Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and [@railstotrails](#) on social media.