

CHANGEMAKERS FOR TRAILS SERIES

Making Your Voice Heard and Shaping Federal Decisions

Mar. 24, 2025





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Changemakers for Trails



- Your partner in providing information, resources and calls to action to connect with elected officials and decision makers, ensuring they know how important trails and trail networks are to your life.
- Designed to help more people speak up for trails, walking and biking where they live and across the country.
- Changemakers is an opportunity to transform your passion for trails into impactful advocacy—at all levels of government.

Why We're Here

1. There is much uncertainty about the future of funding and policies surrounding multiple issues—including trails, walking and biking. Your role as an advocate is crucial during this moment
2. Advocacy takes many forms. Every type is important and there are various ways to have an impact with your federal decision makers.
3. RTC has tools to support you in making the case for trails to your federal decision makers.

Week 1 (1/20)

Energy EO (1/20)

DEI EO (1/20)

RAISE NOFO Amendment
(1/24)

Week 3 (2/3)

DOJ asserts executive branch has
authority to continue
implementing

Transportation advocates
gathering evidence of widespread
damage of actions

Week 6 (2/24)

Bill to fully fund Recreational
Trails Program introduced.

Week 2 (1/27)

OMB Memo (1/27)

US District Court Temporary Stay
(DC) OMB Memo (1/28)

OMB Memo Withdrawn (1/29)

DOT Memo: Implementation of
Executive Orders (1/29)

DOT Order: Economic analysis
(principles reset)

US District Court TRO (RI) –
Funding Freeze (1/31)

Week 4 (2/10)

US District Court TRO (RI) – explicit
to OMB Memo, Executive Orders,
IIJA and IRA (2/10)

Workforce reduction EO 2/11

Week 8 + (3/10)

Mar 12 new USDOT memo
calls for additional scrutiny of
bicycle infrastructure

April 20 90-day deadline for
Energy EO



Why Federal and Why Now?

- New USDOT actions have been dynamic, creating concern for transportation funds, including trails and active transportation funding
- Federal decisions, made by both Congress and USDOT, impact trails in many ways
- Consequential active transportation policy and funding changes will be decided in the new federal transportation law
- **Who has influence?**
 - The Legislative Branch: the Senate and House of Representatives
 - The Executive Branch: the White House, USDOT and other federal agencies
 - Influence each other in making decisions about the future of walking, biking and trail infrastructure.

Messaging: Why Trails Matter

- Trail and active transportation networks are **essential infrastructure** for America.
- The **economic impact** of trail and active transportation networks is incredible—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.
- This infrastructure is **critical to delivering the quality of life** that people want.
- Connecting communities with safe walking and biking infrastructure isn't just about recreation or transportation—it's about **creating more vibrant places to live** that are **healthier and safer for children and families**.

Types of Advocacy

- **Everyday advocacy:** introducing your network to trails, sharing on social media, telling your story about why trails matter
- **Community advocacy:** events and activities where you live, organizing supporters (petitions, meetings, etc.), attending community meetings
- **Direct advocacy:** attending meetings with elected officials (city council, county meetings, agency discussions); engaging elected officials (local, state and federal); letters to the editor and press

Community Advocacy



- Opportunity: Engage in Celebrate Trails Day on **April 26**
- Invite your local elected officials to attend an event using the template in our toolkit
- Example: Cleveland, Ohio takes advantage of CTD and community advocacy: bike with the mayor



Mayor Justin Bibb and County Executive Chris Ronayne and Cleveland Metroparks Director Brian Zimmerman | Photo courtesy RTC



Celebrate **Trails** *Day*

powered by rails to trails conservancy

**Save the Date:
Saturday, April 26, 2025**

It's more than a day outside...

Infusing Advocacy Into Community Organizing

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

***Tips: Invite decision-makers early and follow up;
Request a Proclamation to mark the day.***

Generate grassroots advocacy. Have a postcard-writing station, a chance to sign a petition, or a sign-up form so they can stay involved.



Historic Battlefield Trail, Texas | Photo by Brandi Horton

Outreach to Congress, Locals Leaders and USDOT

Organize community leaders and advocate to federal decision makers on importance of funding and support for trails, walking and biking

Engage strategic messengers: business leaders, local chambers of commerce, local and state elected officials

- District meetings, letters, phone calls, outreach from strategic messengers

Use messaging around economic development, quality of life and safety

Outreach to Members of Congress, Governors, local elected officials can help leverage our message that **trail funding is essential**



Actions You Can Take

- Encourage your local elected officials and chambers of commerce to sign-on to RTC's letter to USDOT
- Send messages to your local, state and federal elected officials telling them why trails matter to you
- Sign up to attend Celebrate Trails Day and help recruit leaders to attend
- Meet with your elected officials: sign up to express interest in joining group meetings in your state and district

Key Takeaways

- Fast-paced environment: Consistency and persistence are key in protecting trails.
- Elevate the economic development, quality of life and safety benefits of trail and active-transportation networks.
- Engage with federal decision makers and consider whether local/state elected officials or business leaders can help make the case.
- On the horizon: Next federal transportation bill will gain momentum this year; advocacy for trails as essential infrastructure will be critical. communities.



What's Next?

Take Action Today:

- Using social media (tag @railstotrails)
- Letters to the editor
- Attend community meetings
- Organize events on the trail
- Meeting with elected officials and leaders

Changemakers for Trails:

- Additional trainings and action touch points this year
- Case studies of success
- **Direct advocacy sign-on form**

Resources:

- Webinars
- Blogs
- Resources and training tools:
[Railstotrails.org/advocate](https://railstotrails.org/advocate)



Thank You!