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Biden Administration Infrastructure Goals Demand Robust Investment in Trails, Walking and Biking

While the American Jobs Plan addresses vital issue of bicyclist and pedestrian safety, it's time to get specific about increasing walking and biking to achieve economic, equity and climate goals, says nation's largest active-transportation advocacy organization

Washington, D.C.—Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation's largest active-transportation advocacy organization, responded to the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan saying that while the plan tackles issues of bicyclist and pedestrian safety, it also needs to invest in creating connected active-transportation routes so that people can routinely walk and bike.

“The Biden Administration's proposal is a blueprint for prioritizing transportation infrastructure investments, and they've outlined laudable goals for the country that go beyond building more roads and highways to move more vehicles,” said Kevin Mills, vice president of policy at RTC. “What they missed, though, is an important chance to be explicit about creating and connecting active-transportation infrastructure. Walking and biking routes need to be safe *and* convenient in order to increase use, and this mobility is essential to delivering economic gains, climate protection and equitable communities.”

Research shows that building [trails and other active transportation infrastructure creates more jobs per dollar](#) than any other type of transportation infrastructure because the work is more labor intensive. Shifting short trips currently made by car to [walking and biking trips would have sizable impacts](#) on our economy and our climate. Investing in active transportation infrastructure within and between communities can [equitably provide safe walking and biking routes](#) for people to get where they need to go.

RTC's study, [Active Transportation Transforms America](#), attributes \$34.1 billion annually in economic activity to active transportation, with the potential to grow to \$138.5 billion annually as network connectivity improves, including:

- Mode shift and environmental benefits: The value of fuel savings from shifting short car trips to walking and bicycling trips, using walking and bicycling to access public transit, inducing mixed use and reducing congestion is currently \$3.3 billion annually, which could increase to nearly \$22 billion annually. The amount of CO₂ saved annually could grow by an amount between 13 million and 54 million metric tons annually.
- Calculations of economic impact: The total local spending impact of the nation's rail-trails is \$10.6 billion annually, which could grow to as much as \$21 billion annually.
- Health cost savings: Health cost savings from increased physical activity due to active transportation is currently \$20 billion annually and could grow to nearly \$92 billion annually.

“We are at a pivotal moment—a once-in-a-generation opportunity, as Secretary Buttigieg has said. Year after year, rates of walking and biking increase—accelerated significantly by the pandemic. It’s time for federal policy to align with what the American people have shown they want,” said Mills. “Right now, Congress is actively working on a trio of bills with bipartisan support to increase and target funding for trails, walking and biking. There is a plan to leverage active transportation infrastructure to create jobs, reduce carbon emissions and reconnect America; the administration would do well to build this specificity into its vision.”

The [package of bills RTC is advocating for in Congress](#) has been championed by hundreds of national, state and local organizations representing interests as far-ranging as biking and walking, health, transportation reform, environment, disability rights, planning and our nation's local elected officials. Together, these bills offer critical policy changes to federal funding for active transportation to strategically target investments and maximize the role of trails and other active transportation infrastructure in contributing to job creation and healthy, safe, accessible and equitable communities.

Currently, funding for walking and bicycling facilities comprises less than 2% of the federal surface transportation budget, with limited policy direction to strategically prioritize those funds to fill critical infrastructure gaps and make the active transportation system more effective and efficient. Learn more about RTC's efforts to inspire a visionary transportation reauthorization bill at railstotrails.org/trailstransform, and follow the commentary on social media using the hashtag #TrailsTransform.

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 [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).