

From: e-Dear Colleague
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2011 3:22 PM
To: E-DEARCOLL_ISSUES_G-Z_0000@ls2.house.gov
Subject: NaturalResources, Transportation: Dear Colleague: Support Recreational Trails Program in Transportation Reauthorization Bill

Support Recreational Trails Program in Transportation Reauthorization Bill

From: The Honorable Thomas E. Petri
Sent By: debbie.gebhardt@mail.house.gov
Date: 4/5/2011

April 5, 2011

SUPPORT THE RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

in the Surface Transportation Bill

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in expressing strong support for the continuation of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) by signing the attached letter to the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The RTP is an FHWA-administered program, first created in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and operated through state trail programs with the active involvement of diverse trail interests through state trail advisory councils.

Most importantly, the RTP is unique because funding is provided by taxes on fuel paid into the Highway Trust Fund by users of off-highway recreational vehicles. This embodies the "user pay" philosophy that has been the backbone of the Federal highway program since 1956. The RTP funds mostly small but vital trail projects, including maintenance. Like most federal transportation programs, a minimum 20 percent match is required for these projects, but in practice, the projects attract much greater non-federal support. The RTP supports trails for both motorized and non-motorized transportation.

Our letter urges that the program be continued in the surface transportation reauthorization bill currently being developed by the Committee. While the exact funding level must be determined in the context of the overall size of the bill, we do ask that \$2.5 million be allocated for a DOT study of off-highway recreational fuel use to ensure that the level of RTP funding accurately

reflects the federal fuel taxes paid by off-highway users. We also request that the funds allocated to the FHWA to administer the RTP each year be established at a base of \$840,000 (current law) or as 1% of actual money available, whichever is higher, to ensure that sufficient administrative resources are available for this valuable program.

We invite you to join us in signing the following letter to the leadership of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. If you have any questions or would like to sign on, please contact Debbie Gebhardt (Petri) at debbie.gebhardt@mail.house.gov (225-2476) or Dustin Hilt (Michaud) at dustin.hilt@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-6306.

The deadline to sign on is Thursday, April 14.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Petri

Michael Michaud

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

April , 2011

The Honorable John L. Mica

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall

Chairman

Ranking Member

Committee on Transportation

Committee on Transportation

and Infrastructure

and Infrastructure

2165 Rayburn House Office Building

2163 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John J. Duncan, Jr.

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio

Chairman

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

B-376 Rayburn House Office Building

B-375 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Rahall, Chairman Duncan and Ranking Member DeFazio:

We write to express our strong support for continuing the successful Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The philosophy behind the RTP is simple: fuel taxes collected from non-highway users should benefit those who paid the taxes. This is similar to the Wallop-Breaux program, where boaters benefit from the fuel taxes they pay. As the Committee works to streamline and consolidate programs, it should continue to recognize the unique character of this program.

Since its creation in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, the RTP has brought new economic vitality to communities across the nation, helped Americans to be active and healthy, and unified often-divided trail interests to craft state trail plans and aid all trail interests. More than 15,000 projects have been funded under this program to date, including trail corridor purchases, trail construction and maintenance and environmental mitigation.

We were pleased that the RTP has been funded under every reauthorization since 1991, and we request that adequate and fair funding be including in the next reauthorization bill. Since the RTP is supported by taxes on fuel used in off-highway recreational vehicles, we request that \$2.5 million be allocated to a DOT study of off-highway recreational fuel use to ensure that the level of RTP funding reflects the federal fuel taxes paid by off-highway users. Finally, we ask that the funds allocated to the FHWA to administer the RTP each year be established at a base of \$840,000 (current law) or as 1% of actual funds available, whichever is higher, to ensure that sufficient administrative resources are available for this valuable program.

Thank you for your consideration of the successful and unique Recreational Trails Program.

Sincerely,

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