
**America Bikes ~ American Council of Snowmobile Associations ~ American Hiking Society
American Horse Council ~ American Motorcyclist Association
American Recreation Coalition ~ American Trails ~ BlueRibbon Coalition
Cross Country Ski Areas Association
International Association of Snowmobile Administrators
International Mountain Bicycling Association
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association ~ League of American Bicyclists
Motorcycle Industry Council ~ National Association of Service and Conservation Corps
National Association of State Park Directors ~ National Recreation and Park Association
Professional Paddlesports Association ~ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
Student Conservation Association ~ United Four Wheel Drive Associations**

July 14, 2004

The Honorable
United States Senate/U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510/20515

Dear Senator/Representative:

We are writing to express our strong and united support for significantly increased funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) as part of the reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation program. The RTP enjoys the enthusiastic support of the nation's trail community, including representatives of both motorized and non-motorized activities.

Under both ISTEA and TEA-21, Congress authorized a portion of the fuel tax revenue generated by off-road recreational use for the RTP under the "user-pays/user-benefits" doctrine. Each state receives federal funding which is then matched with state or local funds, providing important economic and social benefits to thousands of communities.

RTP has been highly successful. More than 6,700 projects have been completed to date, benefiting millions of recreational trails users – hikers, bikers, trail cyclists, snowmobilers, off-road motorcyclists, equestrians and many other types of trail enthusiasts. State trail administrators report that there are many more eligible project proposals than can be funded.

Both the House and the Senate have now acted to extend and expand the RTP. However, we note that neither version of the legislation will achieve our request for funding of at least 50% of the \$286 million in federal excise taxes collected annually on fuel used for off-highway recreational activities.

The House-passed bill, H.R. 3550, will do much more to promote quality trails for more Americans, providing \$503 million over six years for the RTP program. We thus urge that the conference committee adopt the House funding provisions for RTP.

There is another compelling reason for Congress to act decisively in support of recreational trails. Our nation is faced with a serious – yet preventable – public health threat associated with inactivity-related obesity. Trails are an essential element in addressing this major threat to our nation's health and well-being. Accessible recreational trails can help prevent the estimated 400,000 premature deaths each year and annual medical costs now in excess of \$100 billion attributed to obesity.

We thank you on behalf of all Americans for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

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Campaign Manager
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