

## NRPA POLICY POSITION

- Support dedicated funding for Active Transportation options, including trails and pedestrian projects primarily through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Safe Routes to Schools and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Combined, these programs, found in the federal surface transportation bill “MAP-21”, provide approximately \$800 million annually for walking and biking projects to promote pedestrian and bicycling safety in local communities. MAP-21 is due to expire in May 2015.
- Co-sponsor H.R. 199: Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvement Act. This legislation would provide local communities with low-cost loans to build safe and accessible networks of sidewalks, bikes lanes and paths as part of the federal transportation financing program known as TIFIA. Twenty-five percent of the loan financing for this program must be used to help low-income communities.

## PARK AND RECREATION FACT SHEET

# FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY

### ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails: Essential to the Economic Activity, Health and Social Equity in Local Communities***

#### **BACKGROUND**

Since 1992, funding for biking and pedestrian projects has been provided through three main transportation programs: 1) the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), 2) the Transportation Enhancements Program (TE), and 3) the Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS), with dedicated funding provided for each. Under the former transportation law, states were required to provide a specified amount of their federal surface transportation dollars to bike and pedestrian projects.

In 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law and significantly changed the way in which funding is provided for these projects. MAP-21 ultimately consolidated many programs and ceded more decision-making authority and flexibility to the states. The result was a new consolidated program, Transportation Alternatives, with less overall funding, more ways in which states can transfer funds to other purposes, and more competition for the limited dollars.

Specifically, MAP-21 eliminated the TE and the SRTS Programs as dedicated funding programs and consolidated them, along with many others, under the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The RTP is included as its own account under

TAP. Funding for TAP is 33 percent less than the funding previously provided for the TE and SRTS programs.

The transportation law expires in May 2015 and Congressional leaders are meeting to discuss the components of the next surface transportation bill. The biggest challenge facing Congress is actually how to pay for it. The Highway Trust Fund — revenue from the federal gas tax — which historically has provided the dollars to fund the federal surface transportation program, is scheduled to run out of funding before the current law even expires.

#### **WHY CONGRESS NEEDS TO ACT**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report the following bad news: (1) The Highway Trust Fund is no longer generating enough revenue to fund existing obligations under the federal transportation program (MAP-21); and (2) the projected annual shortfall — cost to simply maintain existing funding levels for MAP-21 and extend the law for another year after it expires this May — is anticipated to be between \$13 and \$19 billion annually.

The bottom line: If Congress doesn't act sometime before June, nearly all of the federal transportation programs, including the walking, biking and safety projects funded through it, will come to grinding halt later this year, placing hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs at risk.

Even with all the discussion about funding, it's important to note that currently, just 1.5 percent of federal transportation spending goes to build sidewalks, trails and bikeways. Meanwhile, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) data reports biking and walking make up 12 percent of all trips, and bicyclists and pedestrians represent 14 percent of all traffic fatalities. Eliminating the tiny percentage of funding for bicycling and walking projects may worsen the existing discrepancy between funding, safety, and number of trips made by foot and bike.

Available funding for bike and pedestrian projects has gone from \$1.2 billion to approximately \$800 million, and this funding is no longer specifically dedicated to bike and pedestrian projects. Not only is there less funding, there is increased competition for the funding as more projects are now eligible to receive it.

A 2013 Princeton Survey Research Associates survey of 1,000 Americans found that 83 percent of all respondents support maintaining or growing the amount of federal transportation funding that helps build sidewalks, bike lanes and bike paths. The results crossed political lines with 88 percent of Democrats; 80 percent of Republicans and 86 percent of Independents all supporting continued or growing funding for walking and biking.

During the reauthorization process, elimination of funding for TE, RTP and SRTS programs was seriously considered. Given the concern over how to fund the next surface transportation bill and the general climate favoring reduced spending, it is likely there will be another attempt to eliminate or significantly reduce funding for bike and pedestrian projects.

NRPA recently released two (2) new studies highlighting the impact Active Transportation plays in promoting Economic Activity, Health & Wellness, and Social Equity in local communities:

- ***Active Transportation and Parks and Recreation***
- ***Sage Routes to Parks: Improving Access to Parks through Walkability***

Please visit: [www.nrpa.org/research-papers/](http://www.nrpa.org/research-papers/) to download your free copy

**Just 1.5 percent of total federal transportation spending goes to improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and access.**

