

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

- The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and reauthorized again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) .
- The legislation applies the “user-pay/user-benefit” philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund, returning federal tax on fuel used for nonhighway recreation to the states for trail projects.
- Eligible projects include: maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails; development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails; purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment; construction of new recreational trails (with specific requirements when federal land is involved); acquisition of easements and fee simple title for recreational trail corridors; and assessment of trail conditions. State administrative and educational program costs are capped at 7% and 5% respectively. States are encouraged to work with qualified youth conservation or service corps.
- After a slow start under ISTEA, when \$37.5 million was made available for the program, funding has grown substantially and, by September 30, 2010, nearly \$780 million will have been made available to states for recreational trails. Half of all funding is apportioned to the states equally. The remaining 50% is apportioned among eligible states based upon nonhighway recreational fuel use in each of those states during the preceding year.
- Thirty percent of funds are to be spent for uses relating to motorized recreation; 30% are to be spent for uses relating to nonmotorized recreation. In addition, 40% shall be used for projects that facilitate diverse recreational trail use within a recreational trail corridor, trailside or trailhead.
- The Recreational Trails Program has had a dramatic and positive impact on the quality of life in America through thousands of projects nationwide and through new cooperation among diverse trail enthusiasts, government officials at the federal, state and local levels, and national organizations in the conservation, recreation, and transportation fields. We also now understand better the role of RTP-aided trails in the nation’s campaign to attack inactivity and obesity.
- ***As Congress develops the next national surface transportation program, the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) urges the following modifications to the Recreational Trails Program:***
 - 1) ***increase funding to \$690 million over six years:*** \$90/100/110/120/130/140 million;
 - 2) ***provide \$2.5 million in funding for a USDOT study of nonhighway recreational fuel use;***
 - 3) ***adjust allowed FHWA administrative expenses*** to 1% of actual available annual funding, and permit up to 100% federal share for approved administrative expenses and projects;
 - 4) ***simplify funding provisions for projects on federal lands***, incorporating provisions applicable to federal lands highway projects that allow up to 100% federal share;
 - 5) ***recommit to and codify provisions encouraging use of youth conservation corps and volunteers*** (see www.corpsnetwork.org/images/stories/transportation/TCN_GuideBook_FINAL.pdf for examples);
 - 6) ***exempt RTP projects from review by Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning processes*** where the projects are (1) recreational in character, (2) less than \$100,000 in total cost and (3) include major volunteer effort; and
 - 7) ***allow credit for donated easements and rights-of-way*** as part of a project’s non-federal cost if done within 18 months of project authorization.

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