

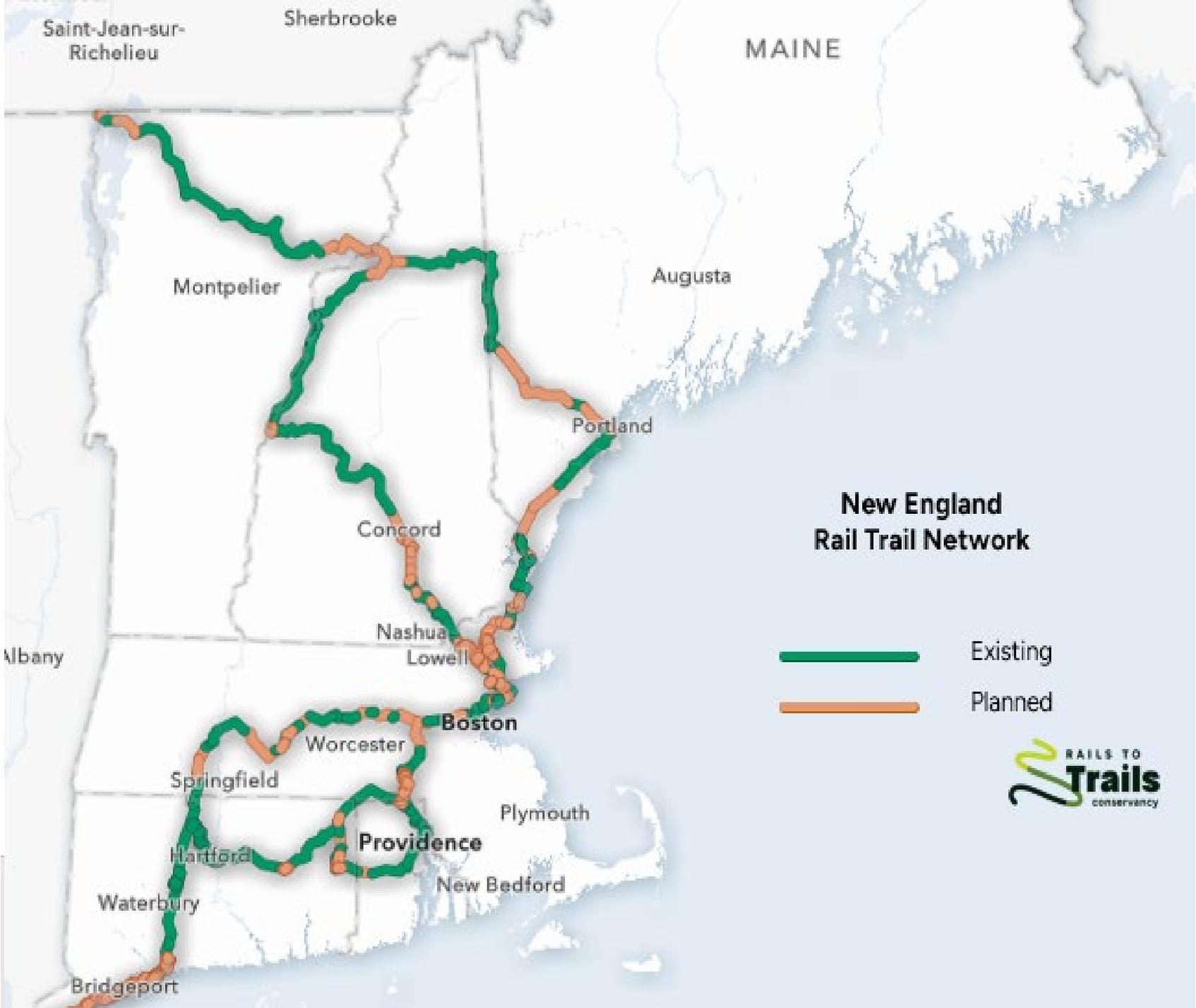
Federal Policy: Rail Trail Impacts

New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition
October 17, 2025. Concord, NH.

Kevin Mills
Vice President of Policy
Rails to Trails Conservancy



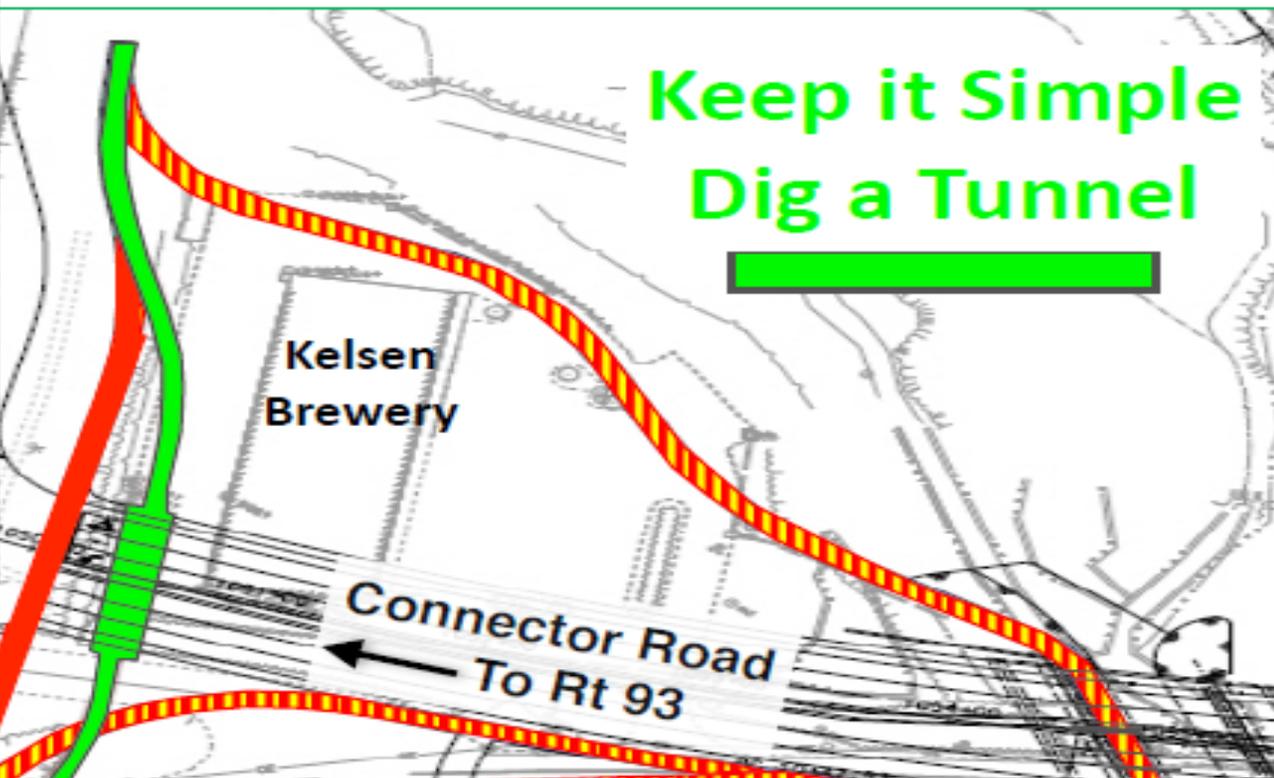
Existing: 747 miles
Planned: 485 miles
Total: 1,232 miles



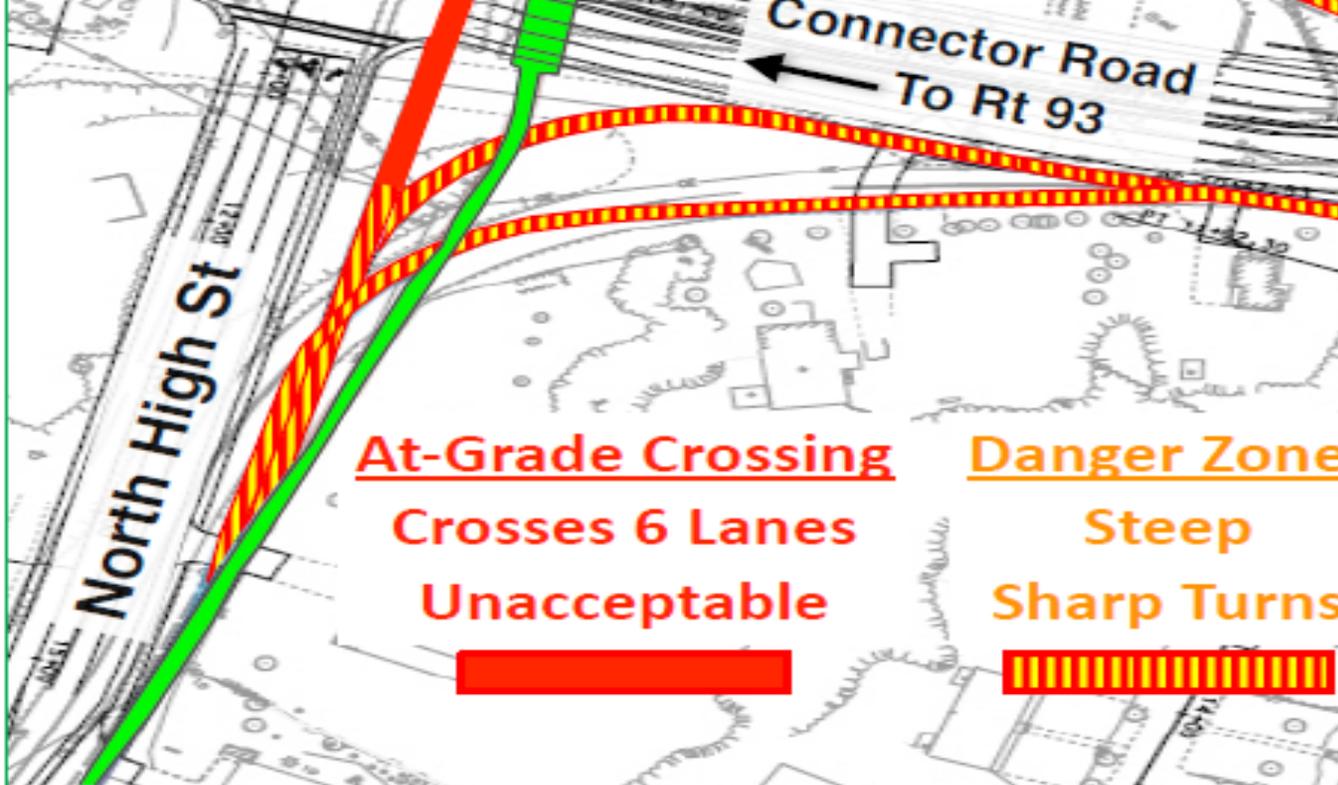
Salem Bike- Ped Corridor







Keep it Simple
Dig a Tunnel



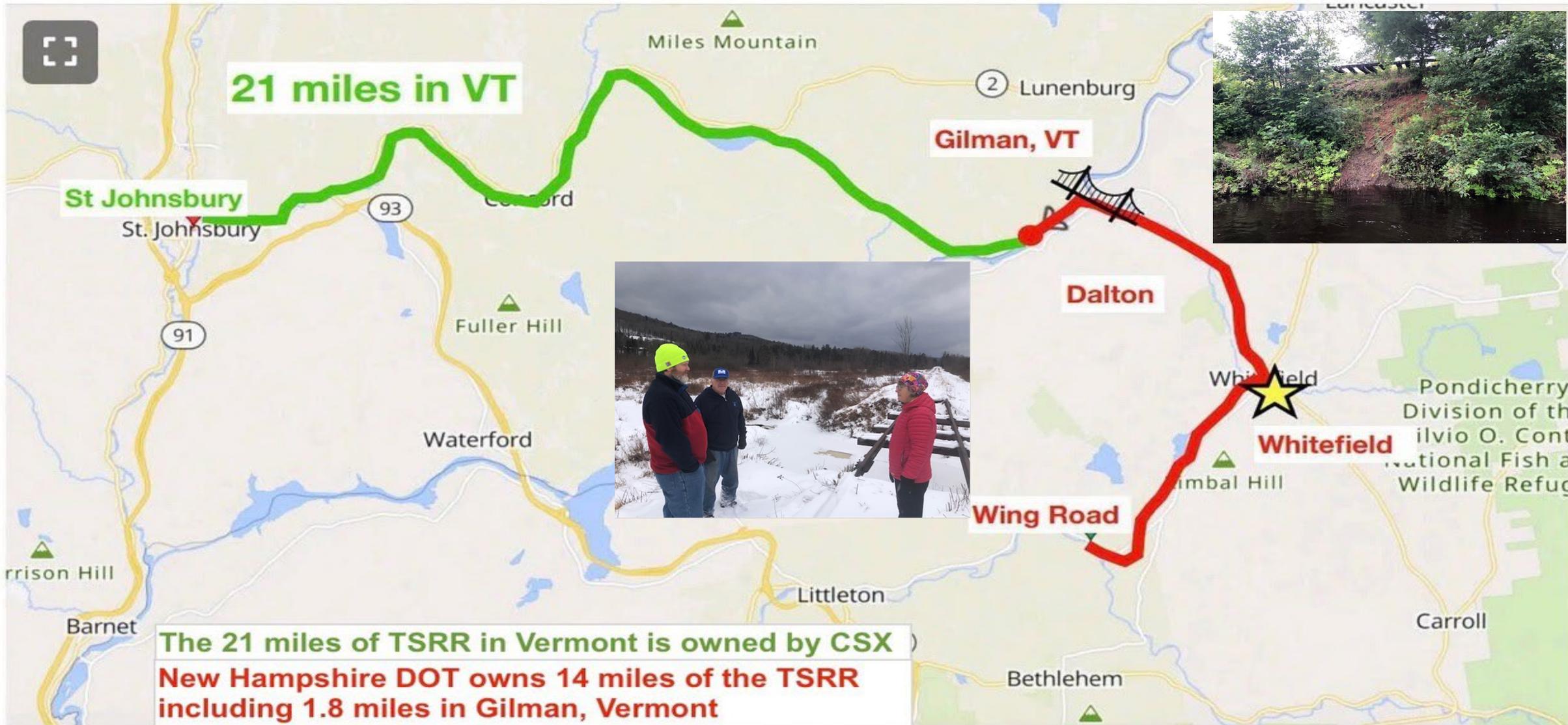
At-Grade Crossing
Crosses 6 Lanes
Unacceptable



Danger Zone
Steep
Sharp Turns







Federal Collaboration

Rep. Chris Pappas (NH-01)

House champion: Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program

Leadership on Recreational Trails Program



Map on NHRTC website

Recent events in federal funding #1

Federal grants: whiplash

From unprecedented awards for trails

(RAISE, Safe Streets, Reconnecting Communities)

————→ claw back of \$



Recent events in federal funding #2

Reauthorization of federal transportation law: back to future?

Emerging themes:

Consolidation of programs

State control

Max flexibility/min accountability

Highway-centric



RTC's Reauthorization Agenda

1. Improve dedicated trail/walk/bike programs
2. Multi-modal grants for innovation
3. Align formula \$ to states with federal goals

Prioritizing A Safer, Connected America

A Surface Transportation Reauthorization Agenda to Build the Nation's Essential Walking and Biking Infrastructure

Decades of federal, state and local investment has established a foundation for the nation's active transportation system. Today, the country's 42,000+ miles of multiuse trails and hundreds of developing trail and active transportation networks reach every single state and generate more than \$34 billion in annual economic activity. It is now easier to walk, bike and be active in more places, but the nation continues to fall short of reaching the goal that people can safely and conveniently walk and bike to the places they want to go—having safe pedestrian and cyclist routes throughout and between communities. These connections represent essential infrastructure to improve safety, quality of life, economic development, and mobility for all Americans.

Reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation policy offers an opportunity to make further progress on these goals, creating access to this infrastructure for everyone. Federal programs dedicated to trails, walking and biking like Transportation Alternatives (TA), the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIIP) provide vital policies and investments that, combined with state and local efforts, have contributed significantly to flourishing regional economies and interstate commerce, putting walking and bicycling infrastructure to work generating opportunities for mobility and economic development.

Despite progress, existing infrastructure remains far short of what is needed to make it safe and convenient for American families to walk, bike and be active. Traffic fatalities and injuries among pedestrians and bicyclists remain unconscionably high absent broad investment in connected safe routes to the places people want to go. In 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) revitalized funding for trails and active transportation to better align with the robust demand from people across America's landscape, but there is far more work to be done to meet the nation's needs.

RTC is urging Congress to build on this progress by implementing the following recommendations in the next surface transportation reauthorization, establishing a policy framework that will deliver the active transportation infrastructure America needs.

Contact Kevin Mills, RTC's vice president of policy, at kevin@railstotrails.org for questions or more information.

1. Strengthen and Grow TA and RTP

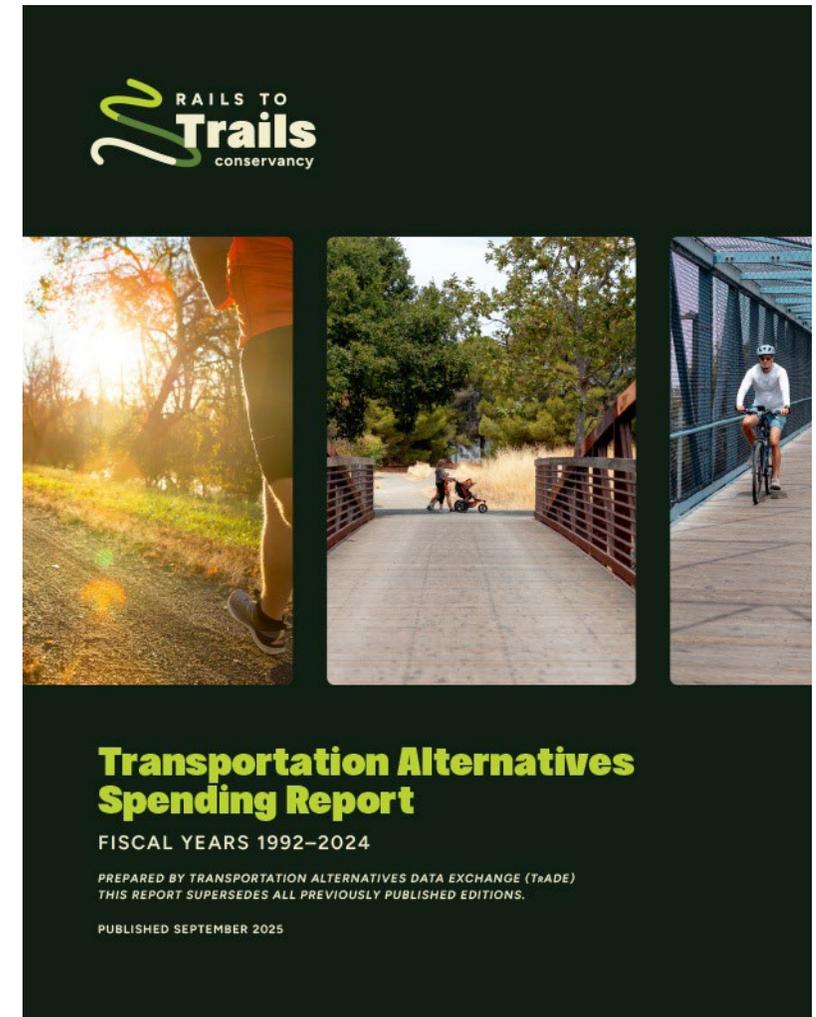
Congress should improve and strengthen TA, the nation's largest dedicated federal funding source for trails, walking and biking, by increasing funding commensurate with need and implementing specific policy changes: providing transparency around transfers of funds out of the program, reducing the local match, providing incentives to states to invest in larger projects and provide technical assistance, and collecting and reporting data about how the program is implemented.

In combination with its predecessor program, Transportation Enhancements (which originated in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991), TA has provided resources necessary to develop trail and active transportation infrastructure in rural, suburban and urban communities nationwide, feeding a growing demand to further develop this infrastructure because of its impact on the economy and quality of life.

Recent events in federal funding #3

Transportation Alternatives: opportunities and threats

- improved delivery
- VS.
- dilution/consolidation



Federal policy threat to rail trails

Anti-railbanking bill (H.R. 4924)

- Renders corridor preservation tool unusable
- Invites federal meddling in railbanked trails





Thank You!

