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**Testimony submitted on behalf of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**

By Patrick Wojahn, Director of Government Relations  
Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Hearing on HB 351  
February 12, 2020, 1:00 pm

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is the nation's leading organization dedicated to connected trail networks and building healthy places for healthy people. With 6,200 members and supporters across the State of Maryland, RTC advocates for development of trail networks around the State including the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network and the Capital Trails Coalition Network.

RTC submits this testimony in support of HB 351, which would establish a Land Use and Vehicle Miles Traveled Workgroup, with amendments. Among other things, this workgroup would develop a State strategy to reduce vehicle miles traveled, as well as design and align land use and transportation investments to increase proximity between daily activities. Such strategies are critical to help local communities more efficiently use their transportation infrastructure by allowing opportunities for people to walk and bike to their daily destinations whenever possible. As Mayor of College Park, I understand well the impact that these impacts can have.

RTC supports proposed amendments to the bill that would more explicitly ensure that the workgroup pursue opportunities to provide safe connections for walking and biking between residential communities, job centers and commercial districts, and incorporate consideration of biking and walking infrastructure throughout the bill. These amendments would ensure that the workgroup fully consider opportunities for mode shift to walking and biking and explore increased investment in safe active transportation networks for commuting and other daily needs.

Vehicle mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicles to more environmentally sustainable modes like transit, biking and walking, is not only possible, but necessary. The Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program, which invested over \$100 million from the federal budget to develop networks of non-motorized transportation infrastructure in four communities (Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, Marin County, California, Columbia, Missouri, and Minneapolis, Minnesota) demonstrated the potential impacts.<sup>1</sup> As indicated in the Program's Final Report in 2012, this investment resulted in an estimated 16 million miles of traveling by walking or biking in 2010, the last year of the program, that otherwise would have been driven.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/nhttp/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/nhttp/)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Federal Highway Administration, "Report to the U.S. Congress on the Outcomes of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program, SAFETEA-LU Section 1807," Executive Summary, [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/nhttp/2012\\_report/page01.cfm#Toc308001010](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/nhttp/2012_report/page01.cfm#Toc308001010).

This investment also helped facilitate transit use by enabling people to safely walk or bike to transit. Even with significant increases in the number of people walking and biking, bicycle and pedestrian crashes held steady or decreased in all the communities.<sup>3</sup> The 2017 National Household Travel Survey found that 53% of all trips taken are within 3 miles or less, and 28% of all trips taken are within 1 mile or less.<sup>4</sup> Investment in safe and connected infrastructure for biking and walking provides the opportunity to convert many of these short vehicle trips to biking and walking.

The benefits of mode shift to walking and bicycling go beyond merely allowing fewer people to drive and extend to a wide array of public health, economic and environmental benefits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized a critical role for active transportation in meeting physical activity guidelines and thereby reducing morbidity and mortality from a variety of health conditions.<sup>5</sup> RTC estimates that a substantial investment in active transportation infrastructure could double the number of people who meet the CDC's recommended guidelines of walking and/or biking at least 30 minutes a day.<sup>6</sup>

Mode shift to walking and biking also would benefit the state's economy and environment. In a substantial investment scenario, considering increases in public transportation ridership due to active transportation connections to transit, short trips converted to biking and walking, and trip length reductions due to induced mixed use, biking and walking could lead to an annual reduction of 54 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions around the country.<sup>7</sup> Walkable and bikeable communities also bring an array of economic benefits, including increased economic activity at local businesses, a greater ability to attract new economic development, recreational tourism and increased property values.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the wide array of economic, environmental, public health and transportation benefits of mode shift to biking and walking, Maryland stands to benefit greatly from investment in safe and connected infrastructure for walking and biking. We call on the Environment and Transportation Committee to favorably recommend HB 351 with amendments to better clarify what the workgroup will do to investigate and pursue mode shift to active transportation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. If you have questions, please contact Patrick Wojahn, Director of Government Relations, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, at 240-974-5111.

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<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2017 National Household Travel Survey Tables, March 2018, <https://nhts.ornl.gov/download.shtm>

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

<sup>6</sup> Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, *Active Transportation Transforms America*, [https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=active-transportation-transforms-america&id=21688&fileName=ActiveTransport\\_2019%20Report\\_FINAL\\_Reduced.pdf](https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=active-transportation-transforms-america&id=21688&fileName=ActiveTransport_2019%20Report_FINAL_Reduced.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Id. at 35.

<sup>8</sup> Id. at 40.