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Testimony in Support of HB 1526, the Transportation Carbon Fund Act

By Patrick Wojahn, Director of Government Relations, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 5, 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 and active transportation networks around the State including the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network and the Capital Trails Coalition Network.

RTC joins with the undersigned organizations in submitting this testimony in support of HB 1526, which would establish a Transportation Carbon Reduction Fund as a lockbox for revenues received due to participation in the Transportation and Climate Initiative. The bill would also establish a Workgroup to proceed with implementation of the Transportation and Climate Initiative in Maryland, for the purpose of making recommendations related to use of those funds.

This Workgroup would, among other things, create a best-value analysis tool to maximize the benefits of investment decisions, including investment that facilitates walking and biking, and projects and programs to prioritize for funding, including pedestrian and biking infrastructure.

Investment in trails and other safe infrastructure for walking and biking can make a critical difference in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation-related sources. 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.¹ 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.² The decrease in driving led to a reduction of over 3,800 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.³

¹ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/nntp/

² 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/nntp/2012_report/page01.cfm#Toc308001010.

³ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/nntp/2012_report/page06.cfm#Toc308001087

Stronger nationwide investment in safe and connected trails and active transportation systems could set the country on a course toward dealing more substantially with the transportation-related causes of climate change. RTC’s research has shown that, 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.⁴ Maryland can start to play its part by passing HB 1526 and establishing a Workgroup to explore how to ensure the greatest possible benefit from investment in active transportation infrastructure.

RTC also supports the provisions in HB 1526 that would charge the Workgroup with studying mapping indicators and parameters for defining disadvantaged communities, including those overburdened by disproportionate rates of pedestrian fatalities. Low-income communities consistently face disproportionately higher rates of pedestrian deaths, sometimes as much as twice the level of pedestrian fatalities in wealthier communities.⁵ In Maryland, African-American communities are especially vulnerable, facing a pedestrian fatality rate 33% higher than white, non-Hispanic people.⁶ HB 1526 provides an opportunity to help address these disparities by helping ensure greater investment in pedestrian and bicycle safety for all communities.

Trails and active transportation networks can be a tool to provide greater access for all Marylanders to job or educational opportunities in a way that is safe and more affordable. As a result of the investment in the Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program, even with significant increases in the number of people walking and biking, bicycle and pedestrian crashes held steady or decreased in all the communities involved in the pilot.⁷ 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.⁸ Many more people will take these trips by walking and biking if they have safe and accessible ways to do so.

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.

The Bicycle Escape
Bike HoCo
Bike Maryland
BikeAAA
Bikemore

Frederick Bicycle Coalition
Race Pace Bicycles
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

⁴ Id. at 35.

⁵ <https://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-pedestrian-deaths-analysis.html>

⁶ https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/uploads/2019/06/Dbd2019_State_MD.pdf

⁷ Id.

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2017 National Household Travel Survey Tables, March 2018, <https://nhts.ornl.gov/download.shtm>