



March 28, 2022

The Honorable Rep. Adam Smith
The Honorable Rep. Suzan DelBene
The Honorable Rep. Derek Kilmer
The Honorable Rep. Rick Larsen

The Honorable Rep. Pramila Jayapal
The Honorable Rep. Kim Schrier
The Honorable Rep. Marilyn Strickland
United States House of Representatives

Re: Green Infrastructure to Improve Access to Trails, Outdoors & Active Mobility

Dear Members:

We are writing to you as members of the Puget Sound Trail Access Network, which coordinates on emerging federal policy and legislation across recreation and transportation, with the goal to increase funding for regional multimodal trails, transit-to-trails, parks and greenspaces, water trails, and backcountry trails in our region. Our coalition’s constituencies represent more than 90% of the 4.2 million individuals that recreate outside and use active mobility in the Puget Sound region. With nearly 6 million residents projected by 2050, increasing access to trails is critical to meet demand for transportation options and nearby recreation; currently, only 15% of residents live within one mile of a shared-use path or protected bike lane.

We appreciate your leadership in preserving and expanding Puget Sound’s trail access through recent actions in passing an FY22 omnibus budget, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and your support of the Build Back Better Act.

As Congressional offices plan for FY23 appropriations, we seek your support for critical green infrastructure—including paved and unpaved multi-modal trails, greenspace, and recreational trails—for transportation, economic, and quality-of-life benefits.

Please include the following items in your priorities for work on FY23 appropriations:

Preserve and increase critical funding for critical outdoor recreation experiences in Puget Sound. These programs expand public lands stewardship, grant funding for more accessible opportunities to the outdoors for youth and all communities, and help to create pathways to employment that increase equity in our region.

- **\$130m - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program** (Department of Interior, National Park Service)
- **\$30.51m - Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails Budget** (Department of Agriculture, Forest Service)

Fully fund active transportation programs established in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. These programs build facility networks that connect communities through new competitive grants, accelerating local and regional plans to create safe, convenient walking and biking routes to everyday destinations; and pilot projects to reduce flooding, improve air quality, and mitigate the urban heat island effect within communities of color and low income communities.

- **\$500m - Active Transportation Infrastructure Improvement Program** (Department of Transportation)
- **\$100m - Healthy Streets Program** (Department of Transportation)

Fund the green infrastructure programs previously outlined in the Build Back Better Act. These programs help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address critical infrastructure issues, such as economic development, mobility equity, zero-emission transportation options like bicycling and walking, and provide pathways to sustainable green jobs through projects that reduce dependence on single-occupant vehicle trips.

- **\$4b - Community Climate Incentive Grants** (Department of Transportation)
- **\$4b - Neighborhood Access and Equity Grants** (Department of Transportation)
- **\$82m - Civilian Climate Corps Initiative** (Department of Interior, National Park Service)
- **\$19m - Civilian Climate Corps Initiative** (Department of Agriculture, Forest Service)

The return on investment for trails is strong. Trails already support 81,000 Washington jobs (on par with the aerospace industry). Trail-based activities make up 1.45% of Washington's gross domestic product and contribute \$8.2 billion per year to Washington's economy. Trails in Washington give back a whopping \$5.9 billion in environmental benefits per year¹. We can grow Washington's trail-based economy via targeted infrastructure investments: Active transportation projects provide 17 times more jobs per dollar than highway projects.

Your leadership in funding green infrastructure, including active transportation and outdoor recreation, comes at a critical time for Washington. These investments are crucial to preserving a sustainable future in Puget Sound. They will create equitable pathways to green jobs, invest in local economies, and create healthier, active populations. We would be more than happy to work with you on this effort and to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Washington Trails Association
Leafline Trails Coalition
Eastrail Partners
Issaquah Alps Trails Club
ForeverGreen Trails
Washington Bikes
Cascade Bicycle Club
The Wilderness Society
Transit Trekker

¹ Washington Recreation and Conservation Office, 2019 October.
(<https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HikingBikingStudy.pdf>)