



## COALITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS DOMINATES DOT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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Washington, D.C. (September 19, 2013) – The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) successfully showcased the importance of the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in a new, high-visibility venue: The Strategic Plan Online Dialogue of the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. CRT members reviewed the DOT’s Draft Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018 in early September and were very concerned that there was no mention of the RTP within the DOT mission statement, mission-oriented goals or strategic objectives. On behalf of the CRT membership, Co-Chair Derrick Crandall submitted comments to DOT that called attention to this oversight, summarizing the RTP’s importance in its opening paragraphs:

“The Recreational Trails Program . . . has been a vital force in creating and assisting trails for all enthusiasts – in urban and rural locations alike. The program has unified America’s trails community nationally and at the state level and is built around a simple concept: federal gas tax paid in conjunction with nonhighway recreation should be used, at least in part, to benefit those paying the taxes and other trail users sharing a dependency on safe, accessible trails.

“The DOT should expand the part of its Strategic Plan dealing with livable communities by recognizing the substantial contribution to livability provided by recreational trails under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which the DOT has administered for more than 20 years. More than 20,000 projects have been funded since the program’s creation by the U.S. Congress. These projects serve millions of people.”

The comments also pointed out that strong national support for RTP, which had carried it through a very difficult reauthorization process in 2012, made the case for its inclusion in the DOT Strategic Plan even more compelling:

“Support for the program from all trail interests persuaded the Congress to reauthorize it nearly unchanged in 2012 through MAP-21 – surprising many. But it didn’t surprise us. Accordingly, the Coalition for Recreational Trails strongly recommends that the DOT Strategic Plan embrace the Recreational Trails Program as an inspiring DOT success story.”

(more)

### COALITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS

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## **CRT Dominates Strategic Plan Add One**

The trails community's response to these comments was immediate and impressive. By the time the idea submission and voting process had ended – only three days after the CRT submitted its comments – CRT's submission, entitled "RTP Is Important Plan Element," was voted the most popular of all the ideas submitted to the DOT.

CRT Co-Chairs Derrick Crandall and Marianne Fowler both commented on this incredible showing. "There were 287 ideas submitted and 3,967 votes cast," said Mr. Crandall. "CRT's submission finished #1 with 215 votes and 24 comments. The next highest tally was 71 votes and 5 comments for 'More Emphasis on Transit, Biking, Walking.' Not far behind in #4 was 'Recreational Trails Are an Essential Part of Livable Communities,' with 61 votes. In 13<sup>th</sup> place was 'Return OHV Gas Tax to OHV Recreation' with 30 votes and 'Recreational Trails Program' was in 27<sup>th</sup> place with 20 votes. Overall, the four RTP 'ideas' attracted almost 10% of all votes." Added Ms. Fowler, "Without question, RTP ran away with the Secretary's blog. Perhaps this summer's 'No Opt-Out' campaign, which was successful in keeping 49 of 50 states in the program, had heightened people's awareness and they wanted to speak their minds – and they certainly did."

CRT leaders plan to follow up on this important success by meeting with key DOT officials to discuss the RTP's long-term future.

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*The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) is a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations. Its members work together to build awareness and understanding of the Recreational Trails Program, which returns federal gasoline taxes paid by off-highway recreationists to the states for trail development and maintenance. CRT was formed in 1992 following the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to ensure that the National Recreational Trails Fund (now known as the Recreational Trails Program or RTP) established by that legislation received adequate funding. During the six years of ISTEA, CRT worked to ensure that program was continued and strengthened as part of the ISTEA reauthorization process. Following the 1998 passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the 2005 approval of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), both of which significantly increased RTP program funding, CRT's efforts were focused on supporting its continued, effective implementation and its extension and enhancement through the next round of transportation legislation and resulted in the reauthorization of RTP with dedicated annual funding of \$85 million for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014 in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21).*

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