

STATE DOT BEST PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides significant new funding opportunities and supports initiatives for walking, biking and trail infrastructure projects—particularly for communities with limited capacity. This includes more money through programs such as Transportation Alternatives, the largest federal funding source for trails and active transportation; flexibility around match requirements; and the promotion of technical assistance activities.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has instituted several policies that take advantage of these new eligibilities, utilizing best practices that other states could adopt.

WHAT IS TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES?

Transportation Alternatives (TA) is a cost reimbursable, pay-as-you-go competitive grant program administered by state departments of transportation (DOTs) and urbanized metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Prior to construction, the project must be approved by your DOT and authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Typically, DOTs have provided 80% of the construction costs, with the additional 20% due by the entity that submitted the application. Proposed projects must demonstrate either: 1) a clear public benefit and have a direct relationship to surface transportation, or 2) well-defined benefits as recreational trail facilities.

WHAT'S NEW?

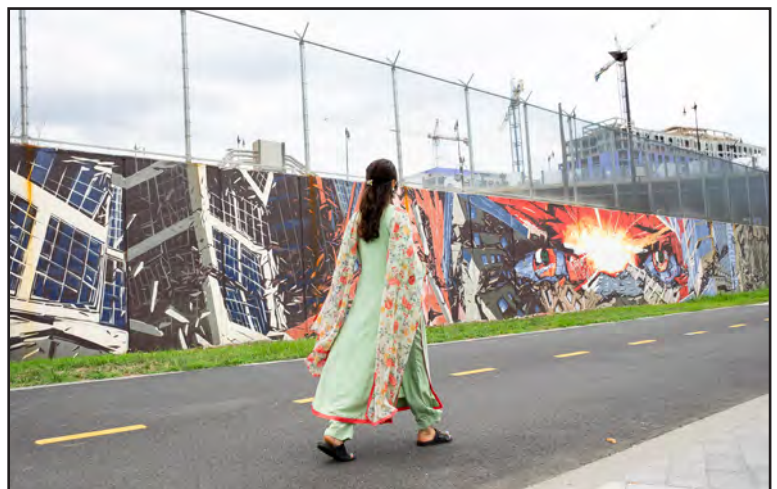
With the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), TA has the ability to provide the standard 20% local funding match with Federal Safety funding (i.e., the Highway Safety Improvement Program, or HSIP). The BIL contains a requirement for states (23 U.S.C. 148(g), further explained in a USDOT Memo at [rtc.li/fhwa-section148](https://www.rtc.li/fhwa-section148)) to devote 15% of their HSIP dollars to projects focused on saving vulnerable

road users' (non-motorists') lives if they make up 15% or more of their roadway deaths (visit [rtc.li/fars](https://www.rtc.li/fars) to determine your state's requirements). Importantly, the BIL amended 23 U.S.C. 133(h)(7)(B) to allow HSIP funds to be credited toward the non-federal share of a TA project so that all states can cover 100% of projects that address bicycle and pedestrian safety on public roads or publicly owned bicycle or pedestrian pathways or trails.

ODOT has taken advantage of this eligibility with the state's Offices of Local Programs and Safety, agreeing to fund Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities and Safe Routes for Non-Driver projects with 80% TA funds and 20% safety funds. This funding will be available for the Construction Contract and the Construction Engineering phases of the projects only. The costs associated with Design and Rights-of-Way must still be borne 100% by the applicant.



Ohio's Cleveland Foundation Centennial Lake Link Trail | Photo by Jason Cohn



D.C.'s Metropolitan Branch Trail | Photo by India Kea

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Snowmobiling on Maine's Aroostook Valley Trail | Photo by Paul Cyr

OTHER NOTABLES

ODOT will continue to provide up to 95% (this is due to the use of Toll Revenue Credit) of the construction costs (up to a maximum amount) for Environmental Mitigation, Vegetation Management, and Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation of Historic Transportation Facilities through Fiscal Year (FY) 2027. Rights-of-way acquisition costs are only allowable for the conversion of abandoned railway corridors to shared-use path facilities. The local government match must be in cash. In-kind contributions will not be accepted. Eligible projects include those focused on the maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails, the development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails.

The IIJA created a new funding pool called the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). The purpose of the CRP is to reduce transportation emissions through the development of statewide carbon-reduction strategies and by funding projects designed to reduce transportation emissions. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities and Safe Routes for Non-Driver projects are eligible types of CRP projects. ODOT's Safety Department has also agreed to provide the 20% local match for these projects; therefore, the Construction Contract and Construction Engineering phases of these projects will be 100% federally funded.

There is nothing extra the applicant will need to submit when applying for CRP funding; however, the community will need to list its population in both the letter of interest and the application. The award committee will determine if the project is eligible.

Invest \$90M in American Rescue Plan in Transformative Trail Projects

Ohio Department of Natural Resources	\$45M*
Clean Ohio Local Match Fund (to elevate projects in underserved communities)	\$5M
Clean Ohio Recreational Trails Fund (to support critical connections & econ. recovery)	\$20M
Recreational Trails Program (to fund overdue maintenance of trail infrastructure)	\$10M
Watercraft, NatureWorks, etc. (to ensure development of all trail treads, e.g. water)	\$10M
*Capacity needed to administer these additional funds for existing programs should be included.	
Ohio Department of Transportation	\$33M*
Walk.Bike.Ohio Implementation (to elevate projects in underserved communities)	\$13M
Safe Walking & Biking MPO Funds (to support critical connections & econ. recovery)	\$20M
*Capacity needed to administer these additional funds for existing programs should be included.	
Ohio Department of Health	\$6M*
Parks Rx Program (to promote outdoor recreation for mental & physical health)	\$3M
Health Assessments/Data Collection (to facilitate local/state efforts increasing trail use)	\$3M
*Capacity needed to administer these additional funds for existing programs should be included.	
TourismOhio	\$3M*
Statewide Trail Economic Impact Study (to emphasize critical quality of life benefits)	\$1M
State Trails Marketing Plan (to maximize econ., health & other quality of life benefits)	\$2M
*Capacity needed to administer these additional funds for existing programs should be included.	
JobsOhio	\$3M*
Brownfield Trails Fund (to encourage trail development in association with projects)	\$2M
Trails Town Program Pilot (to create jobs & economic activity related to local trails)	\$1M
*Capacity needed to administer these additional funds for existing programs should be included.	

Ohio's Trails Economic Impact Study

Concept Proposal

Purpose

Document the actual and overall economic value that Ohio's trails are creating. Deliver on recommendations within ODNR's Ohio Trails Vision. Demonstrate the value that developing trail networks brings to all Ohioans.

Project Description

The State of Ohio seeks an economic impact analysis of its trails system. This includes all trail types, multi-use, hiking, water, equestrian, mountain biking & motorized. The primary goals are to:

- Document the comprehensive existing impact of trails within Ohio.
- Provide accurate impact numbers packaged in a way that can help in the further development, maintenance, management and marketing of the trail system.

Potential Deliverables

Economic Impact Analysis Report

Product: Detailed economic impact modeling and analysis for the existing trails in Ohio. This will include all trail types. The report would include a top-level number (e.g. total economic benefit expressed in dollars) as well as breakdowns that include, but are not limited to, property values, real estate and business investment, supported employment, and revenue generated through trail user transactions. It should also document the value of the health, environmental, recreational, tourism and social impacts of the trails for residents and visitors of the Buckeye State. This would be a comprehensive impact study using methodologies such as IMPLAN or others that model the ripple effect of economic activity not just individual transactional activity.

Case Studies

Product: The study will also, in consultation with the project team, select up to 3-4 trails from each trail type to conduct meaningful research and analysis. Each case study will have its own white paper, documenting the impact it is having on the communities it is a part of. Case Study trails should include geographic diversity as well as a mix of rural, suburban and urban settings.

Briefing paper

Product: One-sheet (front + back), professionally designed briefing paper summarizing key findings from the Economic Impact Study. Paper would include high-level talking points with some professionally produced graphics. Graphics could also be provided as stand-alone elements for use in social media, presentations, etc.

Beneficiaries of Study

- Ohio Citizens
- Trail Managers
- State Agencies
- Advocacy Groups
- Municipalities & Local Government
- Chambers of Commerce
- Convention & Visitors Bureaus
- Land Management Agencies



FY22-25 Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus Agenda

The Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus is committed to these policy priorities, which are identified in the Ohio Trails Vision, for equestrian, mountain biking, hiking, water and multi-use trails because these “linear parks” are significant economic drivers and improve quality of life for all Ohioans:

- I. Promoting Recovery with Trail Investments
 - a. Invest \$90 million in ARPA funds for maintenance and connectivity of the Ohio Trails Network.
 - b. Focus on sustainable economic activity via outdoor recreation and local business, recognizing the importance of supporting all ages and abilities in transportation investment decisions.

- II. Statewide Economic Impact Study
 - a. **Support funding for a Statewide Trails EIS** that will be a:
 - i. Critical Tool to Maximize the Full Potential of Trails/AT, i.e. guides smart policy development and investment decisions, which generate taxes and many other benefits.
 - ii. Becomes foundation for State Trails Marketing Plan, an Ohio Trails Vision priority action item, and confirms why connecting & maintaining a statewide trails network should be prioritized.

- III. Establishing Office of Outdoor Recreation
 - a. **Formalize a State Trails Task Force**, which could coordinate with the Inter-Agency Working Group (ODNR, ODOT, TourismOhio, ODH & JobsOhio) and other agencies/advisory groups, that is directed to make recommendations in such critical areas as:
 - i. Establishing a Dedicated Trail Revitalization Funding Source
 - ii. Developing Potential Funding Mechanism and Other Policy Proposals to Support Completion of a Statewide Trails Network connecting **all trail treads (e.g. equestrian, mountain biking, hiking, water and multi-use)**.
 - iii. Supporting Agencies with Trail/AT-related Program Administration
 - iv. Creating/Establishing the Ohio Trails Vision Map with Metrics**
 - v. Formalizing a State Trail Town/Neighborhood Program
 - vi. Determining a Viable Volunteer Policy that Facilitates Trail Maintenance
 - vii. Aligning/Streamlining Processes Across Agencies/Districts to Ensure Project Completion

- IV. State Agency Capacity Building
 - a. **Support increased funding for capital appropriations** in FY23-24 Capital Budget for trails and active transportation projects given their importance to promoting mental & physical health and well-being as well as economic recovery.
 - b. **Support funding** in FY24-25 Operating Budget **for trail/AT-related program administration**, particularly related to implementing Ohio Trails Vision and Walk.Bike.Ohio.
 - c. **Support funding** in FY24-25 Operating Budget **to facilitate activities of the Inter-Agency Working Group** (JobsOhio, ODNR, ODOT, ODH, TourismOhio, etc.), a priority action item for the Ohio Trails Vision implementation.