Letter of Support for RTP Fuel Funding Study - July 29, 2019

Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman  
Honorable Tom Carper, Ranking Member  
Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Honorable Ben Cardin  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

The nation’s recreational trails community strongly supports Section 1514 of America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019 mandating a Nonhighway Recreational Fuel Study. This study is needed to allow Congress to assess the contributions of the Recreational Trails Program to our nation and strategies to continue and expand this contribution. Since its creation by ISTEA in 1991, the Recreational Trails Program has enabled more than 24,000 projects and programs to be completed under federal/state/local/private partnerships leveraging the available funding and contributing to our economy, to the nation’s health and safety, and to greater access to our public lands and waters.

We deeply appreciate the Committee’s support for trails and its response to the request for inclusion of this provision by a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators.

Adventure Cycling Association  
American Council of Snowmobile Associations  
American Hiking Society  
American Horse Council  
American Motorcyclist Association  
American Trails  
Americans for Responsible Recreational Access  
Back Country Horsemen of America  
Bikes Belong  
Blue Ribbon Coalition  
The Corps Network  
Equine Land Conservation Resource  
International Association of Snowmobile Administrators  
International Mountain Bicycling Association  
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association  
The League of American Bicyclists  
Motorcycle Industry Council  
National Association of Recreation Resource Planners  
National Association of State Trail Administrators  
National Bicycle Greenway  
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council  
National Recreation and Park Association  
Outdoor Recreation Roundtable  
Partnership for the National Trails System  
People for Bikes  
Professional Trail Builders Association  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Recration Vehicle Dealers Association  
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association  
SnowSports Industries America  
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America  
Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association  
Student Conservation Association  
Tread Lightly!  
United Four Wheel Drive Associations

COALITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS
Co-Chairs:

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SEC. 1514. NONHIGHWAY RECREATIONAL FUEL STUDY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) HIGHWAY TRUST FUND.—The term “Highway Trust Fund” means the Highway Trust Fund established by section 9503(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(2) NONHIGHWAY RECREATIONAL FUEL TAXES.—The term “nonhighway recreational fuel taxes” means taxes under section 4041 and 4081 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to fuel used in vehicles on recreational trails or backcountry terrain (including vehicles registered for highway use when used on recreational trails, trail access roads not eligible for funding under title 23, United States Code, or back country terrain).

(3) RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM.—The term “recreational trails program” means the recreational trails program under section 206 of title 23, United States Code.

(b) ASSESSMENT; REPORT.—

(1) ASSESSMENT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and not less frequently than once every 5 years thereafter, as determined by the Secretary, the Secretary shall carry out an assessment of the best available estimate of the total amount of nonhighway recreational fuel taxes received by the Secretary of the Treasury and transferred to the Highway Trust Fund for the period covered by the assessment.

(2) REPORT.—After carrying out each assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Finance and Environment and Public Works of the Senate and the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

   (A) to assist Congress in determining an appropriate funding level for the recreational trails program— (i) a description of the results of the assessment; and (ii) an evaluation of whether the current recreational trails program funding level reflects the amount of nonhighway recreational fuel taxes collected and transferred to the Highway Trust Fund; and

   (B) in the case of the first report submitted under this paragraph, an estimate of the frequency with which the Secretary anticipates carrying out the assessment under paragraph (1), subject to the condition that such an assessment shall be carried out not less frequently than once every 5 years.

(c) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out an assessment under subsection (b)(1), the Secretary may consult with, as the Secretary determines to be appropriate—

(1) the heads of—

   (A) State agencies designated by Governors pursuant to section 206(c)(1) of title 23, United States Code, to administer the recreational trails program; and

   (B) division offices of the Department;

(2) the Secretary of the Treasury;

(3) the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration; and
(4) groups representing recreational activities and interests, including hiking, biking and mountain biking, horseback riding, water trails, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-highway motorcycling, all-terrain vehicles and other offroad motorized vehicle activities, and recreational trail advocates.