

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6482  
AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDING FOR BIKEWAYS, GREENWAYS AND  
**Title:** RECREATIONAL TRAILS.  
**Vote Date:** February 17. 2023  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 1/30/2023  
**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL** Environment Committee

### **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To increase funding for bikeways, greenways and recreational trails for the betterment of the state and its population

### **Joint Favorable Substitute:**

Establish \$3 million in funding for the next five fiscal years.

### **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None expressed

### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

#### **Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, the Connecticut Audubon Society:**

The Connecticut Audubon Society does support equitable access to nature for all in the state. The Audubon society operates more than 20 miles of trails and 22 sanctuaries and work with regional entities to restore and improve these areas.

**R. Bruce Donald, Southern New England Manager, East Coast Greenway Alliance:** Bruce Donald testified that ECGA is an infrastructure project of national and regional significance. We have over 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida with 35% or it built and over 100 miles of Connecticut's 200 completed. We are the only state that has its own Recreational Trails Program modeled on the federal program but better funded and less red tape.

**Lisa Fernandez, President, Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association:**

Lisa Fernandez testified as advocates of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, FORTTA supports completing the state's trail system.

**Clair Cain, Trails Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association:**

CFPA has managed and maintained Connecticut's Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System for over 90 years. Because of storm events fueled by climate change there is much work to maintain trails and the infrastructure safety. On the first weekend in June Connecticut holds the largest Trails Day and 2023 is our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This is a testament to our State's long affair with trails.

**Sandy Fry, Chair, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board:**

Sandy Fry testified how encouraged the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board was by the progress made in the last several years in extending the state's network of greenways, bikeways and recreational trails. This funding will assist communities throughout the state whether it be urban, suburban or rural.

**Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut:**

There has been an increase on Connecticut trails with bikers, walkers, skaters, runners, and dog walkers. Encouraging the use of these areas helps improve air quality and provides a healthier lifestyle.

**Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns:**

Betsy Gara testified in support of the increases of funding for the Trail and Greenways grants program therefore assisting municipalities and non-profit organizations to create and maintain beautiful outdoor recreation facilities.

**James Giana, President, Friends of Goodwin Forest:**

Friends of Goodwin Forest maintain 21 miles of trails in the James L. Goodwin Forest in Hampton with access some of the finest natural spaces in Connecticut. Financial support from the RTP program has helped leverage member support and volunteer labor. Because of storms fueled by climate change there is more work than ever to keep the trails maintained. It is imperative that the committee support an increase in the bonding allotment for the RTP grant program.

**Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association:**

Eric Hammerling gave testimony on how trails bring economic activity to communities. Increasing the bonding for RTP grants will bring more outdoor recreation and therefore causing economic growth in hiking, camping, climbing and biking.

**Valerie Stolfi Collins, Executive Director, Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association:**

The mission of the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association is to support the recreation and park profession, promote active lifestyles, livable communities and quality of life for all who call this state their home. The allocation of additional funds will improve the recreational infrastructure.

**Ashley Zane, CBIA:**

Ashley Zane gave testimony on how increasing bikeways expands access to careers and opportunities to those that cannot afford a car. The next generation of workforce are looking for alternative means of transportation and it plays a role in deciding where to live and work.

**Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council:**

Amy Blaymore provided testimony on how the bonding increase is consistent with the level the program recommended in the Governor's Biennial Budget for 2022-2023. The demand for RTP grants exceeds the availability of funds leaving many projects tabled without financial assistance. We need this grant program to balance the protection of the land and its usage for public enjoyment.

**Janet Ainsworth:**

On behalf of the Appalachian Mountain Club the nation's oldest conservation and outdoor recreation organization and their support this bill for the funding of outdoor recreation.

**The following also submitted testimony in support of the bill:**

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Juliet Cain, Greenways and Recreation

Beth Critton

Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut

Donna Hamzy Carriccia, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: February 22, 2023**