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America Bikes ~ American Council of Snowmobile Associations ~ American Hiking Society  
American Horse Council ~ American Motorcyclist Association ~ American Recreation Coalition  
American Trails ~ BlueRibbon Coalition ~ Continental Divide Trail Alliance  
International Association of Snowmobile Administrators ~ International Mountain Bicycling Association  
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association ~ League of American Bicyclists  
Motorcycle Industry Council ~ National Association of Service and Conservation Corps  
National Association of Recreation Resource Planners ~ National Association of State Park Directors  
National Recreation and Park Association ~ Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association  
Professional Paddlesports Association ~ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy ~ Specialty Vehicle Institute of America  
Student Conservation Association ~ Thunderhead Alliance ~ United Four Wheel Drive Associations

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February 28, 2005

The Honorable James L. Oberstar  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Oberstar:

We are writing to express our strong and united support for TEA LU's significantly increased funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The RTP enjoys the enthusiastic support of the nation's trail community, including representatives of both motorized and non-motorized activities.

Under both ISTEA and TEA-21, Congress authorized a portion of the fuel tax revenue generated by off-road recreational use for the RTP under the "user-pays/user-benefits" doctrine. Each state receives federal funding which is then matched with state or local funds, providing important economic and social benefits to thousands of communities.

RTP has been highly successful. More than 7,000 projects have been completed to date, benefiting millions of hikers, bikers, trail cyclists, snowmobilers, off-road motorcyclists, equestrians and many other types of trail enthusiasts. State trail administrators report that there are many eligible project proposals that now go unfunded.

Both the House and the Senate passed legislation in 2004 which would have extended and expanded the RTP. Neither version of the legislation achieves our request for funding of at least 50% of the \$286 million in federal excise taxes collected annually on fuel used for off-highway recreational activities.

H.R. 3 will do much to promote quality trails for more Americans, providing \$503 million over six years for the RTP program. We thus urge that the House embrace this funding provision for RTP and insure its inclusion in final surface transportation legislation. There is another compelling reason for Congress to act decisively in support of recreational trails. Our nation is faced with a serious – yet preventable – public health threat associated with physical inactivity-related obesity. Trails are an essential element in addressing this major threat to our nation's health and well-being. Accessible recreational trails can help prevent the estimated 400,000 premature deaths each year and annual medical costs now in excess of \$100 billion attributed to obesity.

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We thank you on behalf of all Americans for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

Marianne Fowler  
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