

To: State Horse Councils

Date: May 5, 2009

Recreational Trails Program in Jeopardy

The Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is in danger of not being re-authorized. Since its inception the RTP has provided approximately \$730 million for thousands of state and local trail projects across the country, including many that benefit equestrians. If Congress does not re-authorize this program this year, the RTP could no longer be available to recreational riders.

It is vitally important that the recreational riding community let Congress know how important the RTP is to all recreational riders around the country.

The RTP provides funding directly to the states for recreational trails and trail-related facilities for all recreational trail users. It was created in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and was last re-authorized in 2005 as part of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act. This law is about to expire. The RTP will have to be re-authorized in the national surface transportation program bill, which will be conspired in the coming months if it is to continue.

RTP projects consist of construction, maintenance and restoration of trails and trail related facilities as well as the acquisition of easements or property for trails. Although each state manages its own program, 30% of RTP funds must be spent on non-motorized projects like equestrian trails, 30% on motorized, and 40% percent on multiuse projects.

It is important to remember that the RTP is one of the few sources for federal funding of trail projects that are not on federal land available to equestrians. The program has been a great resource for equestrians to fund projects in their state and local parks.

In the coming months Congress is expected to begin work on the next 5 year highway bill. We must lay the ground work for the re-authorization of RTP now. The AHC, in conjunction with a broad coalition of recreational trail users, is requesting that Congress not only re-authorized the RTP, but also increase funding for the program to \$555 million to be spent over the five years of the bill.

The AHC urges State Horse Councils to contact their Congressional delegation to voice support for this program and let them know this program is important to the horse community. Please ask each of your members to contact their Representative

and Senators with the same message. Grassroots support for this program is very important.

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will soon begin drafting the next 5 year highway bill. A list of members of these committees is attached. If members of your Congressional delegation sit on either of these committees it is extremely important that you contact them as early as possible since they will be writing the first draft of this bill. But, even if your Representatives or Senators do not sit on these committees please contact them.

Attached is sample letter that can be used as a starting point to craft letters to your Representatives and Senators. You should personalize it with information about your organization, yourself and your state trails. Please Fax or Email it to your Representatives or Senators because regular mail must go through a long security process.

Contact information for your Representatives and Senators can be found at <http://www.house.gov/> and <http://www.senate.gov/> or call the AHC.

As always, please send copies of any emails, letters or faxes you provide to your elected Representatives or Senators to the AHC at bpendergrass@horsecouncil.org or fax to 202-296-1970.

If you have any questions please contact the AHC.