

## Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5291  
AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDING FOR BIKEWAYS, GREENWAYS AND  
**Title:** RECREATIONAL TRAILS.  
**Vote Date:** 3/18/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/7/2022  
**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:**

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Dist.	Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121 <sup>st</sup> Dist.
Rep. John K. Hampton, 16 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Michel A. Winkler, 56 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Sen. Julie Kushner, 24 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Maria. P. Horn 64 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Jennifer Leeper, 132 <sup>nd</sup> Dist.
Rep. Kenneth M. Gucker, 138 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Sen. Will Haskell, 26 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Rep. Christine Palm, 36 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Rep. Jamie S. Foster 57 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw 17 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Rep. Josh Elliott, 88 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	Rep. Aimee Berger-Girvalo 111 <sup>th</sup> Dist.
Rep. Jullian Gilchrest, 18 <sup>th</sup> Dist.	

### **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To increase grant funding for the increase of recreational trails that will provide positive impacts to economic development and health to the people of Connecticut.

### **Substitute Language – LCO 3647**

Increased the over all bond authority from 19 million dollars to 22 million dollars.

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

#### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner Energy & Environmental Protection**

On the grounds of recreational trails DEEP stands ready to responsibly administer the level of grant funding that is authorized. The recreational trails grant program funds nonprofit organizations, municipalities, state departments and tribal governments for the construction of new trails. More than half of all communities have benefited from the Connecticut Recreational Trails Grant program. Recreational trails provide positive impacts for tourism, economic development, public health, alternative transportation and community resiliency. Positive impacts include taxes from monies spent on lodging, transportation, souvenirs, restaurants and bars and many more.

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

### **David Anderson, Save the Sound**

Bikeways, greenways and trails help protect the environment and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Some of the benefits to communities are preserving and creating open spaces and encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles.

### **Paul Bunevich, Town Engineer, Watertown Public Works Department**

Our contact to the natural world is more important than ever and the opportunity to create the 2.38 mile segment of the Naugatuck River Greenway into recreational trails would be a vital asset for the people of Watertown and the Central Naugatuck River Valley.

### **Clare Cain, Director, Connecticut Forest and Park Association**

CFPA has managed and maintained Connecticut's Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails system for over 90 years. Maintenance of these trails requires a tremendous amount of resources and financial support from the Recreational Trails Program. Participation in outdoor recreation has boomed especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is essential that we keep our recreational trails in great shape and promote our natural spaces.

### **Barbara Collins, President, Farmington Valley Trails Council**

The FVTC is a non-profit that raises money to assist the towns in our area build and maintain trails. More money is needed. During the pandemic the use of our trails increased dramatically. Connecticut is unique in that we are the only state that has its own Recreational Trails Program modeled on the federal funds. These funds are invaluable for keeping our well-used trail system maintained and growing.

### **Clifford Cooper, President, Friends of Litchfield Community Greenway**

Recreational trails for hiking, running, and cycling attract new residents and create healthy recreational opportunities. The next phase of the Litchfield Community Greenway will take years to fund if relying solely on individual donations and so the Recreational Trails grant program is so important to continuing our greenway.

### **Travis Counsel, Executive Director, New England Mountain Bike Association**

NEMBA is a non-profit organization that focuses on enabling trail access for all throughout New England. There is a need for trail funding for maintenance and expansion of these trails that are an important investment in the future of Connecticut's open spaces.

### **Jeanne Davies, Executive Director, Ct. Resource Conservation & Development**

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program. Our organization promotes a twelve-town partnership to build a Regional Air Line State Park Trail. Connecticut's interconnective trails systems are an interconnective trail system.

### **Annamarie Drugonis, First Selectman, Town of Seymour**

The Naugatuck River Greenway spans over seven miles from Torrington to Derby. Additional funding would accelerate the connection. I join other Valley leaders in support of this bill.

**Rick Dunne, Executive Director, Naugatuck Valley Council of Government**

The increase in trail use and outdoor recreation since the beginning of the Covid pandemic has highlighted the importance of the well being of our residents as well as the resilience of our communities. Communities have increased the desire to develop new trails and improve the existing trail networks. Increase funding would help NVCOG continue their efforts to create more trails.

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

Our board has been encouraged by the progress made in the last several years extending the state's network of greenways, bikeways and recreational trails. Increased funding will assist communities throughout the state.

**Andrea Gartner, Executive Director, Friends of the NRVT**

Trails are an important investment for the future of communities. During the pandemic sections of the NRVT increased over 250%. These trails create healthy communities and foster a higher quality of life.

**John Hall, Executive Director, The Jonah Center for Earth and Art**

Our project, The Central Ct. Loop Trail has been a slow vision because of the limit of state bonding. As a result of the limited monies many critical gaps between trails. Raising the bond will make a significant difference to the pace at which bike-travel infrastructures may be built.

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

People are using trails more than ever. UConn Trails Census in 2020 estimates and increase of 38% overall. Half of the trails in Connecticut recorded increased visitation of 68% or greater. Trails are one of the best ways to attract and sustain families and businesses to communities.

**Neil Johnson, Board Member Ct. Outdoor Recreation Alliance**

CORA is a coalition of over 70 business, organizations and individuals who support the development of Connecticut outdoor recreation economy. During the pandemic residents have found respite outdoors and participation continues remains high even as the pandemic lessens. Please ensure more adequate funding for the state and expand and improve access to public recreational trails.

**Cheryl Rykowski, President, Candlewood Valley Regional Land Trust.**

CVRLT promotes the preservation of natural resources. We make land available for educational and passive recreation with the protection of our natural resources. Thru the CVRLT we provide access for educational functions for citizens, students and scouts.

**Scott Schatzlein, Town Engineer, Town of Monroe**

Monroe is currently working on a trail project via a design grant which will provide a vital link between two completed sections of trail. In order to provide non-vehicular access from our residential areas and parks residential trails are very important.

**Kevin Sullivan, Co-founder ,Bike Walk Wethersfield**

We advocate for safe and healthy bicycling and pedestrian activity in our community. Funding for bicycling would be most effective if it is focused on reducing vehicle miles traveled. We recommend prioritizing selections of projects likely to replace car trips and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

**Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate, CBIA**

CBIA supports increasing bond funding to invest in creating a greener Connecticut. Many individuals are looking for alternative means of transportation. Increasing bikeways expands opportunities to individuals who cannot afford a car.

**Over 60 people also testified in support of the bill**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: March 24, 2022**