

March 21, 2023

Governor Healey
Lt. Governor Driscoll
State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Support for the MassTrails Initiative

Dear Governor Healey and Lt. Governor Driscoll,

This year we have re-launched the legislative Trails Caucus, a bicameral group of 43 legislators who understand the need and support the benefits of well-maintained trails. The Caucus aims to “educate legislators and the public on the community benefits of trails and advocates to advance measures in the legislature and executive branch that support their creation and maintenance.”

We are excited to partner with your administration in support of our many common goals including providing safe and ample transportation and recreation options for everyone in the Commonwealth. Towards that end, we wanted to flag a few of our priorities this session.

The Mass Trails program has become an enormously important effort in building and maintaining trails state-wide. As you know, it is an inter-agency initiative between the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Transportation, and the Governor’s office. The MassTrails program has been highly effective at assisting in the design, construction, and maintenance of valuable trails statewide. MassTrails distributes matching grants and technical resources to a wide variety of stakeholders, including cities and towns and nonprofits. It has awarded \$23.5 million in grants that helped advance over 50 miles of trails. The program has completed over 50 projects per year, for a total of 259 since its inception. We’ve made great progress and in Massachusetts 42% of our residents now live within a half mile of a shared-use trail.

In recent years, the demand for funding from the MassTrails program has far exceeded the available annual outlay from the Capital Investment Plan. Insufficient funding holds us back and delays projects in our districts. Let’s build on the success of this program and fund it in a more robust way. **We urge you to increase the annual CIP outlay from its current level of \$10 million to \$15 million for Fiscal 2024.**

We also wanted to highlight one of MassTrails’ current planning projects. The recent release of the [MassTrails Priority Trails Network Vision](#) has laid the framework and provided a clear vision which your administration can now act upon. However, to capitalize on the momentum that has

been built to date, it will be important for your administration to set ambitious goals and prioritize the creation and maintenance of trails at the highest level. We believe it should be our Commonwealth's aspirational goal to have 90% of our residents living within a half mile of a trail that connects them to the services and resources they need. One of the ways to reduce the harmful impact of the pandemic is to provide opportunities for social connections and interactions - something that trails are particularly effective at providing.

As elected officials, we all know that trails have an enormously positive impact on economic development, tourism, public health, and community connections. We believe in the vital importance our trails offer our communities, connecting folks for transportation, recreation, and economic opportunities. Trails provide access to jobs, improve people's physical fitness, lower their BMI, improve their mental health, increase the value of their real estate, and so much more.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we look forward to working alongside you in the years to come.

Sincerely,

State Representative Michelle Ciccolo,
House Chair of the Trails Caucus

State Senator Brendan Crighton,
Senate Chair of the Trails Caucus

C:

Secretary Fiandaca
Secretary Tepper
Commissioner Doug Rice