

From: **Jeff Chapman**
Date: Fri, Dec 18, 2009 at 10:42 AM
Subject: RTP Funding And Advocacy Update
To: Robert Gish

RTP GRANT FUNDING ADVOCACY EFFORT UPDATE

At our last Board of Directors meeting, we discussed the issues with the lack of federal funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) program for 2010. We have two highly rated grants from the State RCO office currently pending for 2010, both a \$10K LNT grant and a \$75K Trail Maintenance grant. The funding for RTP comes from federal gas tax revenues authorized for distribution through federal transportation bills. For 2005-2009, RTP had known dedicated funding by the five year surface transportation fund known as SAFETEA-LU. For 2009, the RTP nationwide allocation was 85 million of which Washington State received around 1.8 million. Out of this money came our 2009 RTP grant. The current 2010 federal budget cycle runs October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010.

Congress debated a six-year renewal this past fall of an entirely different structured transportation bill and failed to pass it. Instead, they passed a continuing resolution to 2009 funding through December 18th. This means the State RCO office has only been allocated (and promised) a small amount (less than 200K) of what they need in order to properly administer the RTP grant program. There are many grants in the hopper waiting for funding from groups such as BCHW, WTA, and others, and the RCO must meet distribution requirements between motorized and non-motorized grants, much like with NOVA. So everything has been on hold.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have been writing legislators through our Action Alert attempting to get a full allocation for 2010 of 90 million nationally. Thank you to all who sent emails or faxes. Ideally we need a multiple-year reauthorization so that the RTP program continues with confidence, but barring that, for 2010, we need a commitment of most or all of the 2010 allocation from Congress.

We have not succeeded. Buried in the Defense bill which passed the House on Wednesday, and which the Senate is expected to pass Saturday (or our troops won't be getting paid), there is another SAFETEA-LU extension that will run through the end of February 2010. The House also passed an ambitious "Jobs For Main Street Act" buried in yet another bill that would extend SAFETEA-LU for the full year (through Sept. 30, 2010) as well as provide millions of dollars for new field jobs within our public land agencies (USFS, BLM, NPS), for youth crews, and for transportation enhancement projects (such as pedestrian/bike urban/suburban trails). However, the Senate will not consider this particular bill until after the holidays, and few think it will pass without major changes due to its high costs. Congress has until the end of February to pass another transportation measure because of the extension in the Defense bill. Many assume Congress may just continue to pass extensions.

So at this point, the RCO can only count on 5/12 of what they would have hoped for 2010 funding for RTP grants. Keep it in mind that this isn't that unusual as the same scenario happened back in 2004-2005 before the five year SAFETEA-LU Act passed. We have every reason to believe that RTP will end up with full funding in 2010 and beyond, much due to the continued efforts of BCHW and other recreation groups nationally to push for it. We can't let up as, along with NOVA, it is one of the few grant funding sources for rural and backcountry work.

We will work with the State RCO on the best way to deal with the current situation. It is entirely possible that by spring we will have good news and a commitment for a full year allocation of funding out of Congress.

Thank You, Jeff Chapman,
BCHW Public Lands Committee Chair