

WisDems: Federal infrastructure package to bring recreational trail money to Wisconsin

Posted on Wednesday, Dec 1, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. — Thanks to President Biden and Democrats in Congress, Wisconsin is preparing to see millions in federal funds dedicated to rebuilding the state's roads, bridges, airports, rails, and ports. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will also boost funding for clean water, broadband, and recreational trails.

Rails to Trails Conservancy, a Wisconsin nonprofit, applauded President Biden and Democrats for delivering “investments in mobility and public health.”

Read what Kevin Mills, the Conservancy's Vice President, said [here](#):

WUWM: [Federal infrastructure package to bring recreational trail money to Wisconsin](#)

A big increase in federal money appears to be heading Wisconsin's way to be used in developing recreational trails and other so-called transportation alternatives.

Currently, Wisconsin receives about \$17 million per year through the alternatives program. But thanks to the recently passed federal infrastructure bill, groups like the Rails to Trails Conservancy project say the state's annual figure may grow to nearly \$30 million within a few years if Wisconsin continues to get just a bit over 2% of the federal pie.

Kevin Mills, the Conservancy vice president, said Congress included a strong push for spending the money on better trail connectivity.

“When we build roads and trails, we think, ‘How do we get people from point A to point B?’ And in the past, the policy supporting trails — walking and biking — hasn’t really been built to achieve that in a reasonable amount of time,” Mills said. “Now, with these new investments, we’re seeing the promise come into focus that we can start doing it that way, so we can make sure people in Wisconsin can get where they’re going, by foot or by bike, safely.”

Mills said the Conservancy continues to support development of a regional trail network called The Route of the Badger, which aims to link 700 miles in southeastern Wisconsin for walkers and bikers.

Mills said most of the new federal money will go to the state transportation department, but some will go to regional planning agencies like SEWRPC.

He urges people to get involved and push for the dollars to be spent on the right projects.

“It’s going to be up to people in their communities coming forward with their best ideas and making clear what kind of impacts they can have with those investments.

Because even though there will be more money to invest, it will still be very competitive,” Mills said.

All Wisconsin House Republicans voted against the infrastructure bill, citing concerns about spending and what one conservative representative called a “Socialist agenda.”

But Mills calls the additional recreational trail money investments in mobility and public health.

State lawmakers who are part of a bipartisan Legislative Trails Caucus are to be briefed on the infrastructure money Tuesday in Madison.