

[~116H4273]

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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a program to award grants to entities that provide transportation connectors from critically underserved urban communities and rural communities to green spaces.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. GOMEZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To establish a program to award grants to entities that provide transportation connectors from critically underserved urban communities and rural communities to green spaces.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Transit to Trails Act
5 of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. TRANSIT TO TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

1 (1) COMMUNITY OF COLOR.—The term “com-
2 munity of color” means a geographically distinct
3 area in which the population of any of the following
4 categories of individuals is higher than the average
5 populations of that category for the State in which
6 the community is located:

7 (A) Black.

8 (B) African American.

9 (C) Asian.

10 (D) Pacific Islander.

11 (E) Other non-white race.

12 (F) Hispanic.

13 (G) Latino.

14 (2) CRITICALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.—

15 The term “critically underserved community”
16 means—

17 (A) a community that can demonstrate to
18 the Secretary that the community has inad-
19 equately, insufficient, or no park space or recre-
20 ation facilities, including by demonstrating—

21 (i) quality concerns relating to the
22 available park space or recreation facilities;

23 (ii) the presence of recreational facili-
24 ties that do not serve the needs of the com-
25 munity; or

1 (iii) the inequitable distribution of
2 park space for high-need populations,
3 based on income, age, or other measures of
4 vulnerability and need;

5 (B) a community in which at least 50 per-
6 cent of the population is not located within $\frac{1}{2}$
7 mile of park space; or

8 (C) any other community that the Sec-
9 retary determines to be appropriate.

10 (3) DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN OF ADVERSE
11 HUMAN HEALTH OR ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS.—
12 The term “disproportionate burden of adverse
13 human health or environmental effects” means a sit-
14 uation where there exists higher or more adverse
15 human health or environmental effects on commu-
16 nities of color, low income communities, and Tribal
17 and indigenous communities.

18 (4) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
19 ty” means—

20 (A) a State;

21 (B) a political subdivision of a State (in-
22 cluding a city or a county) that represents or
23 otherwise serves an urban area or a rural area;

24 (C) a special purpose district (including a
25 park district);

1 (D) an Indian tribe (as defined in section
2 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Edu-
3 cation Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304)) that
4 represents or otherwise serves an urban area or
5 a rural area; or

6 (E) a metropolitan planning organization
7 (as defined in section 134(b) of title 23, United
8 States Code).

9 (5) ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY.—
10 The term “environmental justice community” means
11 a community with significant representation of com-
12 munities of color, low income communities, or Tribal
13 and indigenous communities, that experience, or is
14 at risk of experiencing higher or more adverse
15 human health or environmental effects.

16 (4) LOW INCOME COMMUNITY.—the term “low
17 income community” means any census block group
18 in which 30 percent or more of the population are
19 individuals with an annual household income equal
20 to, or less than, the greater of—

21 (A) an amount equal to 80 percent of the
22 median income of the area in which the house-
23 hold is located, as reported by the Department
24 of Housing and Urban Development; and

1 (B) 200 percent of the Federal poverty
2 line.

3 (6) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means
4 the Transit to Trails Grant Program established
5 under subsection (b)(1).

6 (7) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area”
7 means a community that is not an urban area.

8 (8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
9 the Secretary of Transportation.

10 (9) TRANSPORTATION CONNECTOR.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “transportation
12 connector” means a system that—

13 (i) connects 2 zip codes or communities
14 within a 175-mile radius of a designated
15 service area; and

16 (ii) offers rides available to the public.

17 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “transportation
18 connector” includes microtransits, bus
19 lines, bus rails, light rail, rapid transits, or personal
20 rapid transits.

21 (10) URBAN AREA.—The term “urban area”
22 means a community that—

23 (A) is densely developed;

24 (B) has residential, commercial, and other
25 nonresidential areas; and

1 (C)(i) is an urbanized area with a popu-
2 lation of 50,000 or more; or

3 (ii) is an urban cluster with a population
4 of—

5 (I) not less than 2,500; and

6 (II) not more than 50,000.

7 (b) GRANT PROGRAM.—

8 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall es-
9 tablish a grant program, to be known as the “Tran-
10 sit to Trails Grant Program”, under which the Sec-
11 retary shall award grants to eligible entities for—

12 (A) projects that develop transportation
13 connectors or routes in or serving, and related
14 culturally and linguistically appropriate edu-
15 cation materials for, critically underserved com-
16 munities to increase access and mobility to Fed-
17 eral or non-Federal public land, inland and
18 costal waters, parkland, or monuments; or

19 (B) projects that facilitate transportation
20 improvements to enhance access to Federal or
21 non-Federal public land and recreational oppor-
22 tunities in critically underserved communities.

23 (2) ADMINISTRATION.—

24 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ad-
25 minister the program to assist eligible entities

1 in the development of transportation connectors
2 or routes in or serving, and related culturally
3 and linguistically appropriate education mate-
4 rials for, critically underserved communities to
5 increase access and mobility to Federal or non-
6 Federal public land, inland and costal waters,
7 parkland, or monuments.

8 (B) JOINT PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary
9 shall encourage joint partnership projects under
10 the program, if available, among multiple agen-
11 cies, including school districts, nonprofit organi-
12 zations, metropolitan planning organizations,
13 regional transportation authorities, transit
14 agencies, and State and local governmental
15 agencies (including park and recreation agen-
16 cies and authorities) to enhance investment of
17 public sources.

18 (C) ANNUAL GRANT PROJECT PROPOSAL
19 SOLICITATION, REVIEW, AND APPROVAL.—

20 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary
21 shall—

22 (I) annually solicit the submis-
23 sion of project proposals for grants
24 from eligible entities under the pro-
25 gram; and

1 (II) review each project proposal
2 submitted under subclause (I) on a
3 timeline established by the Secretary.

4 (ii) REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR
5 PROJECT PROPOSAL.—A project proposal
6 submitted under clause (i)(I) shall in-
7 clude—

8 (I) a statement of the purposes
9 of the project;

10 (II) the name of the entity or in-
11 dividual with overall responsibility for
12 the project;

13 (III) a description of the quali-
14 fications of the entity or individuals
15 identified under subclause (II);

16 (IV) a description of—

17 (aa) staffing and stake-
18 holder engagement for the
19 project;

20 (bb) the logistics of the
21 project; and

22 (cc) anticipated outcomes of
23 the project;

1 (V) a proposed budget for the
2 funds and time required to complete
3 the project;

4 (VI) information regarding the
5 source and amount of matching fund-
6 ing available for the project;

7 (VII) information that dem-
8 onstrates the clear potential of the
9 project to contribute to increased ac-
10 cess to parkland for critically under-
11 served communities; and

12 (VIII) any other information that
13 the Secretary considers to be nec-
14 essary for evaluating the eligibility of
15 the project for funding under the pro-
16 gram.

17 (iii) CONSULTATION; APPROVAL OR
18 DISAPPROVAL.—The Secretary shall, with
19 respect to each project proposal submitted
20 under this subparagraph, as appropriate—

21 (I) consult with the government
22 of each State in which the proposed
23 project is to be conducted;

24 (II) after taking into consider-
25 ation any comments resulting from

1 the consultation under subclause (I),
2 approve or disapprove the proposal;
3 and

4 (III) provide written notification
5 of the approval or disapproval to—

6 (aa) the individual or entity
7 that submitted the proposal; and

8 (bb) each State consulted
9 under subclause (I).

10 (D) PRIORITY.—To the extent practicable,
11 in determining whether to approve project pro-
12 posals under the program, the Secretary shall
13 prioritize projects that—

14 (i) are designed to increase access and
15 mobility to local or neighborhood Federal
16 or non-Federal public land, inland and
17 costal waters, parkland, monuments, or
18 recreational opportunities;

19 (ii) utilize low or no emission vehicles;

20 (iii) provide free or discounted rates
21 for low income riders;

22 (iv) provide opportunities for youth
23 engagement;

1 (v) provide employment preference to
2 individuals who reside in the community
3 where the project is granted;

4 (vi) projects established in commu-
5 nities of color, low-income communities,
6 Tribal or indigenous communities, or rural
7 communities;

8 (vii) would capitalize on existing es-
9 tablished public-private partnerships; and

10 (viii) comply with relevant regulations
11 in the Americans with Disabilities Act of
12 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

13 (3) TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCE-
14 DURES.—

15 (A) PROCEDURES.— In consultation with
16 the head of each appropriate Federal land man-
17 agement agency, the Secretary shall develop, by
18 rule, transportation planning procedures for
19 projects conducted under the program that are
20 consistent with metropolitan and statewide
21 planning processes.

22 (B) REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out the
23 program, the Secretary shall ensure the fol-
24 lowing:

1 (i) All projects carried out under the
2 program shall be developed in cooperation
3 with applicable States and metropolitan
4 planning organizations.

5 (ii) All new transportation connectors
6 and routes established under a project
7 shall be accessible in accordance with the
8 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
9 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) accessibility
10 specifications for transportation vehicles.

11 (iii) The applicable State or metropoli-
12 tan organization shall—

13 (I) meaningfully engage with rel-
14 evant stakeholders, and in par-
15 ticular—

16 (aa) impacted community
17 members;

18 (bb) transportation partners;

19 (cc) existing potential pas-
20 sengers;

21 (dd) Tribes and tribal rep-
22 resentatives;

23 (ee) faith-based and commu-
24 nity-based organizations; and

1 (II) ensure that the input of the
2 stakeholders described in subclause (I)
3 is central to the determination of new
4 connectors and routes.

5 (4) FEDERAL SHARE.—

6 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Federal share of
7 the cost of an eligible project carried out under
8 this subsection shall not exceed 80 percent.

9 (B) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-Fed-
10 eral share of the cost of an eligible project car-
11 ried out under this subsection may be derived
12 from in-kind contributions.

13 (5) ELIGIBLE USES.—Grant funds provided
14 under the program may be used—

15 (A) to develop transportation connectors or
16 routes in or serving, and related culturally and
17 linguistically appropriate education materials
18 for, critically underserved communities to in-
19 crease access and mobility to Federal and non-
20 Federal public land, inland and coastal waters,
21 parkland, and monuments; and

22 (B) to create or significantly enhance ac-
23 cess to Federal or non-Federal public land and
24 recreational opportunities in an urban area or
25 a rural area.

1 (6) GRANT AMOUNT.—A grant provided under
2 the program shall be—

3 (A) not less than \$25,000; and

4 (B) not more than \$500,000.

5 (7) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—It is the intent
6 of Congress that grants provided under the program
7 deliver project funds to areas of greatest need while
8 offering technical assistance to all applicants and po-
9 tential applicants for grant preparation to encourage
10 full participation in the program.

11 (8) PUBLIC INFORMATION.—The Secretary
12 shall ensure that current schedules and routes for
13 transportation systems developed after the receipt of
14 a grant under the program are available to the pub-
15 lic, including on a website maintained by the recipi-
16 ent of a grant.

17 (c) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—

18 (1) REPORTS BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—The
19 Secretary shall require a recipient of a grant under
20 the program to submit to the Secretary at least 1
21 performance and financial report that—

22 (A) includes—

23 (i) demographic data on communities
24 served by the project; and

1 (ii) a summary of project activities
2 conducted after receiving the grant; and

3 (B) describes the status of each project
4 funded by the grant as of the date of the re-
5 port.

6 (2) ADDITIONAL REPORTS.—In addition to the
7 report required under paragraph (1), the Secretary
8 may require additional reports from a recipient, as
9 the Secretary determines to be appropriate, includ-
10 ing a final report.

11 (3) DEADLINES.—The Secretary shall establish
12 deadlines for the submission of each report required
13 under paragraph (1) or (2).

14 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
15 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
16 \$10,000,000 the first and second fiscal years that begin
17 after the date of enactment of this Act, \$20,000,000 for
18 the third and fourth fiscal year beginning after such date,
19 and \$40,000,000 for the fifth fiscal year beginning after
20 such date.