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- Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act
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Introduction

The United States is faced with economic, health, environmental and social challenges that can be effectively addressed by active transportation. Research illustrates that active transportation offers several benefits to mitigate each of these challenges.

Transportation policies centered on automobiles provide limited transportation options leading to severe congestion, considerable gas expenses and a transportation system that lacks efficiency. In 2012, the passage of the two-year transportation bill known as MAP-21 made transportation policies even more highway-centric. Signed into law in July of 2012, many viewed this legislation as a setback for active transportation. Under the law, the federal funding for road projects increased from 80 percent to 95 percent while funding levels for alternative transportation were reduced by 30 percent. Prior to MAP-21, there were three transportation programs dedicated to trails and active transportation: TE (Transportation Enhancements), SRTS (Safe Routes to School) and RTP (Recreational Trails Program). MAP-21 has merged these programs into one program known as Transportation Alternatives. Several activities that were approved under the guidelines of TE are no longer eligible for funding under Transportation Alternatives. Some of these ineligible programs include pedestrian and bicycle safety, educational programs, tourist and welcome centers and beautification projects. While limited funding for active transportation is concerning, an even more problematic outcome of this law is that it enables states to opt-out of active transportation programs thus allowing these funds to be transferred to other projects.

The FAST Act, signed into law December of 2015 opens a lot of opportunities for active transportation. The bill includes an increase in funding for bicycling and walking and makes nonprofits eligible for that funding. The bill also creates a new safety education program and, for the first time, includes complete streets language. This program is the most prominent funding source for biking and walking infrastructure projects. Notably, nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for funds, making it easier for nonprofits who run bike share programs to apply directly. Unfortunately, the funding program is no longer a stand-alone program. It is no longer the Transportation Alternatives Program, but rather now set aside in the larger Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program.

Various state and federal funding sources are available for bike-ped projects, especially in looking at Complete Streets projects. Federal TAP funds are available to municipalities with populations under 5,000. These funds sometimes are unused because these small communities generally have few, if any, staff experienced in securing the funds. Further, most Complete

1 Rails to Trails - analysis MAP-21
2 Rails to Trails - Bike/Ped Funding
3 FAST Act
4 Bike League - FAST Act
Streets projects require an 80 percent: 20 percent local match, for which many small communities do not have the disposable funds available to make these projects tangible.\(^5\)

This report presents a summary and evaluation of federal and state transportation policies with language related to bike-ped funding and infrastructure, as well as influential nonprofit organizations making significant progress. The report will introduce state and local policies and initiatives in four southeastern states, with a strong emphasis on North Carolina. The goal of the evaluation is to gain a better understanding of the transportation policies at work in relation to other policies, identify knowledge gaps, and make recommendations about implementation and plausible next steps.

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\(^5\) [NCDOT Complete Streets Evaluation](#)
Methodology

To understand the federal dollars allocated to biker and pedestrian projects, we first did a broad survey of the Apportionments and Computational Sheets from DOT for each year 2010-2021 (Tables 1-4). Expert interviews with key members at the federal, state (NC) and local (Wake County) level were conducted to further our understanding of specific programs and associated funding and obstacles. Greer Beaty and Amna Cameron from NCDOT and Kai Monast from the Institute for Transportation Research and Education were crucial in our understanding of the STI and North Carolina-specific laws and policies. Sig Hutchinson, Wake County Commissioner, was influential in steering us toward advocacy groups for bike-ped and understanding the nuances of these specific funding areas. Leigh Whittaker with Congressman David Price’s office assisted in our foundational understanding of the federal programs at hand and their rippling influences.

In addition to understanding the funding mechanisms of bike-ped policies, we created case studies on local organizations and projects involved in bicycle and pedestrian projects to illustrate the challenges of policy and funding frameworks. We hoped to gain an understanding of each organization’s major goals and projects, as well as the policies and funding processes that affect their organization. Interviews were conducted with East Coast Greenway, Carolina Thread Trail and BikeWalkNC. Lastly, we completed a literature review on transportation policies and funding programs in South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia. In doing so, we were able to analyze the scope of funding restrictions across the Southeast and compare North Carolina’s performance to the other states in question. Each step of our approach allowed for us to make tailored recommendations based on identified barriers and North Carolina Alliance for Health’s unique mission.
Federal Transportation Policies

Federal funding for transportation projects accounts for 25 percent of NCDOT’s annual budget. Money for federal transportation programs comes from the federal motor fuel tax and vehicle fees. Since 2010, there have been three major federal transportation programs: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, effective 2005 - 2012), Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21, effective 2012 - 2014) and Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST, effective 2014 - 2021). Funds flow into programs from MAP-21 and the current-day FAST Act such as the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Highway Safety and Improvement Program (HSIP). Funding from these programs is then allocated to states on an individual basis.6

I. Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

SAFETEA-LU was created to supply needed funding and the programmatic framework to maintain and grow national transportation infrastructure, including the Interstate Highway System, transit systems, bicycling and pedestrian facilities, and freight rail operations.7 The major federal program that supported pedestrian and bicycle mobility is the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program, which allocates TE funds for the provision of bike/ped facilities, safety and educational activities for bikers and pedestrians, and preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use of these spaces for pedestrian or bicycle trails).

The Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS) is a new program under SAFETEA, and requires the Secretary of Transportation to establish and carry out a program to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make bicycling and walking a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities.8 SRTS was funded at $612 million for FY2004-2009, with funding appropriated among the states based on the ratio of total student enrollment in primary and middle schools in each state. The SAFETEA-LU Program Funding Allocation is shown in Table 1.

Congress renewed the bill’s funding formulas ten times after its expiration date in 2009, until replacing the bill with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012.

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6 NCDOT Funding
7 FHWA SAFETEA-LU
8 CRS Report
Table 1: SAFETEA-LU Program Funding Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>2010 Apportioned</th>
<th>2010 Obligated</th>
<th>2011 Apportioned</th>
<th>2011 Obligated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STP North Carolina</td>
<td>$247,962,279</td>
<td></td>
<td>$255,425,971</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$8,785,539,199</td>
<td></td>
<td>$9,209,349,057</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSIP North Carolina</td>
<td>$39,071,096</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40,247,140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$1,546,740,847</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMAQ North Carolina</td>
<td>$52,834,620</td>
<td></td>
<td>$54,424,948</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$2,325,250,596</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,443,340,604</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Trails North Carolina</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,719,398</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$96,570,916</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)

MAP-21 extends SAFETEA-LU for the remainder of FY 2012 and provides funding for surface transportation programs at over $105 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014. MAP-21 restructures several core highway formula programs and incorporates a new formula program structure - note, programs bolded below have funding allocations related to bicycle-pedestrian transportation:

A. National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)
B. Surface Transportation Program (STP)
C. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
D. Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
E. Railway-Highway Crossings (set-aside from HSIP)
F. Metropolitan Planning
G. Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities
H. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Noteworthy provisions of MAP-21 related to biker and pedestrian transportation include a major reduction and consolidation of funding into a broader program called the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP is a new program, with funding derived from the NHPP, STP, HSIP, CMAQ and Metropolitan Planning programs, encompassing most activities funded under the Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to School programs under SAFETEA-LU. Half of the funding allocated to TAP goes to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and the other half goes to states, which may choose to use the funds for other purposes. Major criticisms cite that adding eligibilities such as road uses and environmental mitigation to TAP makes it harder for local communities to compete for funding.

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9 FWHA SAFETEA-LU Computational Tables
10 FWHA MAP-21
11 FWHA MAP-21 Summary, TheHill
12 FWHA Fact Sheet
for local biking and walking projects. Bicycle and rail trail advocates were highly critical of this change, anticipating a 60-70 percent drop in funding from previous programs. The Surface Transportation Program allocates funds to states and metropolitan regions for highway, bridge, transit and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects. Under MAP-21, new responsibilities were added to the preexisting program, though funding was not increased proportionally. Each year, states must suballocate a portion of STP funds to metropolitan areas over 200,000 in population, thus providing regional leaders the opportunity to direct these funds toward local priority projects (eg. biker and pedestrian infrastructure, among others). STP can cover 80 percent of the total cost of a project, with the rest covered by states or localities. Relevant eligible projects include bicycle, pedestrian, and recreational trails.13

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program allocates funds and programs for air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas for ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulates, which reduce transportation related emissions. States without nonattainment areas can use CMAQ funds for any CMAQ or STP eligible projects. Federal funds through this program can be used to build bicycle/pedestrian facilities, on the grounds of reducing traffic-caused emissions. Purely recreational projects are generally not eligible under this program.14

The Highway Safety Improvement Program is a Federal-aid program that provides $2.4 billion nationally for projects and programs that help communities achieve significant reductions in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, bikeways, and walkways. This includes bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, enforcement activities, traffic calming projects, and crossing treatments for non-motorized users in school zones.15

The Metropolitan Planning Program provides funding for statewide and metropolitan coordinated transportation planning. Through this program, federal planning funds are apportioned to state DOTs and then allocated to MPOs. Eligible activities include pedestrian and bicycle planning in order to increase safety for non-motorized users and to enhance the interaction and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes.16

The MAP-21 Program Funding Allocation is shown in Table 2.
Table 2: MAP-21 Program Funding Allocation\textsuperscript{17}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
<td>Obligated</td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
<td>Obligated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAP SET-ASIDE North Carolina</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$22,968,869</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$867,142,140</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STP North Carolina</td>
<td>$256,874,155</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$251,713,908</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$8,587,569,130</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$9,702,633,152</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSIP North Carolina</td>
<td>$37,292,441</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$57,311,966</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total Federal</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>$2,203,717,712</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Trails North Carolina</td>
<td>$4,506,367</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$78,569,033</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

The FAST act eliminates the MAP-21 TAP program replacing it with the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), which provides funding for transportation alternatives (TA). The allocated funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under the MAP-21 TAP. The TAP program under the FAST act encompasses a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvement measures including historical preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation efforts related to stormwater and habitat connectivity. Alongside, keeping many of the programs already created under MAP-21, the FAST act provided crucial long-term funding certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment efforts.\textsuperscript{18}

The FAST Act Program Funding Allocation is shown in Table 3.

\textsuperscript{17} FWHA MAP-21 Computational Tables
\textsuperscript{18} FWHA FAST
Table 3: FAST ACT Program Funding Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
<td>Obligated</td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STP</td>
<td>$301,185,169</td>
<td>$276,369,538</td>
<td>$282,839,491</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$11,162,564,768</td>
<td>$10,330,205,584</td>
<td>$10,548,372,124</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSIP</td>
<td>$66,038,289</td>
<td>$59,274,965</td>
<td>$60,471,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$2,100,584,512</td>
<td>$2,229,786,497</td>
<td>$2,271,575,716</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMAQ</td>
<td>$50,032,395</td>
<td>$50,812,817</td>
<td>$51,865,471</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$2,262,878,736</td>
<td>$2,310,202,733</td>
<td>$2,354,889,085</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>$22,148,051</td>
<td>$16,216,162</td>
<td>$8,077,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$751,802,216</td>
<td>$751,802,216</td>
<td>$766,802,216</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$83,197,784</td>
<td>$83,197,784</td>
<td>$83,197,784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
<td>Obligated</td>
<td>Apportioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STP</td>
<td>$289,371,678</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$10,751,464,280</td>
<td>$10,999,812,510</td>
<td>$12,138,745,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSIP</td>
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<td>$62,809,793</td>
<td>$63,599,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$2,312,416,599</td>
<td>$2,359,470,509</td>
<td>$2,407,842,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMAQ</td>
<td>$52,991,149</td>
<td>$53,861,740</td>
<td>$54,617,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$2,399,545,486</td>
<td>$2,446,474,464</td>
<td>$2,493,588,533</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
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<td>$45,756,364</td>
<td>$22,574,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$766,802,216</td>
<td>$766,802,216</td>
<td>$850,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
<td>$1,613,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Federal</td>
<td>$83,197,784</td>
<td>$83,197,784</td>
<td>$81,996,075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Apportionment: Distribution of funds prescribed by the Statute

*Obligation: The Federal government's legal commitment to pay or reimburse the States or other entities for the Federal share of a project's eligible costs ¹⁹

¹⁹ FWHA TAP Table
Transportation Alternatives Program (FAST TAP - created 2013) is detailed in Table 4.

- **Transfers**: when a state chooses to transfer a portion of TAP (up to 50% is allowed) to other road projects.
- **Lapsed funds**: when a state fails to obligate the funding within 4 years and the funds revert back to the federal government. If a state transfers/lapses, it means less money for Safe Routes, biking and walking.
- **Obligation**: the amount the state has expended or contracted to spend on projects. Measures a state’s progress in holding funding competitions, selecting projects, and moving forward on implementation of projects.

Table 4: FAST TAP Allocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Funding Available (FY 13-21)</th>
<th>Total Transferred by State</th>
<th>Total Let Lapse by State</th>
<th>Percent of Funds Transferred/Lapsed</th>
<th>Total Obligated</th>
<th>Percent Obligated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>$196,923,857</td>
<td>$47,962,999</td>
<td>$4,067,845</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>$112,729,508</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>$6,714,175,069</td>
<td>$1,337,948,114</td>
<td>$63,426,768</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>$4,145,580,975</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All numbers from Federal Highway Administration

*Funding Available excludes the Recreational Trails set-aside and Total Obligated includes TAP obligations and interagency transfers for TAP projects 20

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20 [FWHA FAST Computational Tables](#)
North Carolina State and Local Transportation Policies

State funding in North Carolina accounts for 75 percent of NCDOT’s annual budget. Money for state transportation projects and programs in North Carolina comes from the **Motor Fuel Tax** (50%), **DMV fees** (25%), and the **Highway Use Tax** (25%). Funding from these three revenue sources is then funneled into two state funds: the Highway Fund and the Highway Trust Fund. The Highway Fund specifically supports projects that help take care of the state’s existing system, and the funds are distributed based on need. The Highway Fund is also used to support North Carolina’s Powell Bill.\(^{21}\)

### I. Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) Law

The Strategic Transportation Investments Law was passed in 2013 with the purpose of helping NCDOT use funding effectively and efficiently. The STI established NCDOT’s Strategic Mobility Formula as well as Strategic Prioritization, which were designed to remove politics from the old funding formula by creating separate funding and prioritization categories for state, regional, and local projects rather than distributing money equally across the entire state (Figure 1). Based on the prioritization criteria laid out in the STI, municipalities, MPOs, and the NCDOT vote on whether or not projects will be included in the Strategic Transportation Improvement Program. In addition to establishing a project prioritization process, the STI also outlines how much funding is allocated to each mode of transportation, with highway projects required to receive at least 90% of the available funding.\(^{22}\)

The schematic in *Figure 1* outlines the various inputs and processes that influence project prioritization through the STI. Based on this model, projects are given a final prioritization score that determines if they earn a spot in the State Transportation Improvement Program.

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\(^{21}\) [NCDOT: Finance and Budget](#)

\(^{22}\) [STI Law](#)
II. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The State Transportation Improvement Program is a 10-year state and federal-mandated plan that identifies funding and timelines for transportation projects throughout the state. Projects must earn their spot in the STIP based on prioritization processes outlined in the STI. Once identified in the STIP, projects are expected to receive funding within the 10-year span. The first 6 years of the plan are referred to as the ‘delivery STIP’ whereas the latter 4 years are referred to as the ‘developmental STIP’. The plan is updated every two years and must be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for approval at least every 4 years. 23

III. Powell Bill (State Street-Aid Allocation Law)

The Powell Bill was passed in 1951 as a way for the state of North Carolina to provide financial assistance to municipalities in order to make critical transportation improvements. Each year, funding is allocated to eligible municipalities primarily to assist in resurfacing streets. Funding can also be used to maintain, repair, construct, or widen streets, bridges, and drainage areas as well as plan, construct, or maintain bike paths, greenways, and sidewalks. 24

IV. N.C. Complete the Trails Fund

Passed in 2022, this legislation created the $29.25 million Complete the Trails Fund, which provides funding support to small municipalities for the development of trails to connect to state trails. Through this program, funding must be distributed to the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to a nonprofit partner, such as the East Coast Greenway. In order to be eligible for funding, the organization must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DPR and a 3-5 year plan for the development of the trail. There are currently 12 state trails that are authorized by the N.C. General Assembly. 25

V. Complete Streets

Complete Streets is an internal NCDOT policy adopted in 2009 in order to include alternate modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transit into road improvement and construction plans. Complete Streets is not a law, but is meant to influence early stage planning to help envision a truly multimodal experience. The policy was updated in 2019 to aid in improving implementation of multimodal networks throughout the state. The expectation is that multimodal networks will be included in all new and improved infrastructure projects. NCDOT

23 NC STIP
24 NCDOT Powell Bill
25 N.C. Complete the Trails Fund
only provides funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities if they are part of a new or existing roadway as part of the complete streets vision.\textsuperscript{26}

### NCDOT Allocation of Funding

All federal and state funding in NCDOT’s budget must flow through North Carolina’s STIP, which outlines all of the state’s pre-approved transportation projects. Based on prioritization guidelines in the STI, projects are scored at the local level and then move to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or Regional Planning Organization (RPO) where they again go through an extensive scoring process based on defined criteria. After the MPO or RPO votes, a project may move on to the state DOT where it is reviewed and scored again, and finally it moves on to be included in the STIP. It is important to note that federal funding and state funding are treated differently in terms of how they can be used for transportation projects in North Carolina.

All funding in NCDOT’s budget is broken down into the following funding categories in North Carolina as mandated by the STI:

1. Statewide Mobility (40% of funding)
2. Regional Impact (30% of funding)
3. Division Needs (30% of funding)

Bicycle-pedestrian projects are only eligible through the Division Needs category and must be federally funded projects. The STI requires that at least 4 percent of the budget, but no more than 10 percent, be allocated to non-highway projects. This includes aviation, rail, ferry, public transportation, and bicycle-pedestrian projects.\textsuperscript{27} However, as per the STI, \textit{no state funding can be used for bicycle-pedestrian projects in North Carolina}. Furthermore, despite multiple funding opportunities available for alternative modes through the FAST Act, TAP funding is the only federal funding that can be used for bicycle-pedestrian projects in North Carolina. In order for TAP funding to be used, local municipalities must also provide a 20 percent local match. For smaller rural municipalities, meeting this requirement may prove difficult, providing one possible explanation as to why active transportation funding is reallocated in the state. Furthermore, bicycle-pedestrian projects often score lower based on criteria laid out in the STI prioritization process, making it more difficult for such projects to earn their spot in the STIP. This presents a challenge for investments in active transportation, as all transportation projects in North Carolina \textit{must} be approved according to STI guidelines and included in the STIP in order to be implemented.

\textsuperscript{26} NCDOT Complete Streets
\textsuperscript{27} STI Fact Sheet
Due to these challenges, some have pushed for bicycle-pedestrian projects to bypass the STI given that no state dollars are being allocated to those projects. This would give more power and flexibility to local municipalities on how active transportation projects are funded and implemented. However, if all designated TAP funding is used for bicycle-pedestrian projects, it decreases the amount available for other non-highway projects. Thus, the state is hesitant to allow such an exception in order to maintain control over how federal funding is prioritized and allocated throughout the state. In this sense, unused active transportation funding is likely being reallocated to other non-highway or TAP-eligible projects that have been approved and included in the STIP.
South Carolina State and Local Transportation Policies

In South Carolina, two-thirds of adults ages 18 and over are obese or overweight, with physical inactivity being a contributing factor. Safe places to be physically active are a concern, as South Carolina was ranked as the 7th most dangerous state for pedestrians in 2016.\textsuperscript{28} By creating safe places to walk and bike on a regular basis, the state can help increase physical activity opportunities for residents.

Despite this, South Carolina lacks a cohesive state-level transportation policy related to active transportation. The state does, however, have a strong representation of local organizations and initiatives promoting health and active lifestyles through active transportation projects. South Carolina has also recently established a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Urban Design Committee. These committees will provide a forum for advocates, cities, and regional planning organizations to engage with the state and coordinate improvements for transportation alternatives.\textsuperscript{29}

I. Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

Each state is required to develop a statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) covering a period of at least four years. The STIP is a staged, multi-year, statewide intermodal program of transportation projects, consistent with the statewide transportation plan and planning processes as well as metropolitan plans, transportation improvement programs (TIPs), and planning processes. The STIP must be developed in cooperation with the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), public transit providers, and any Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) in the state, and must be compatible with the TIPs for the state's metropolitan areas.\textsuperscript{30}

The South Carolina STIP, effective from 2021-2027, includes all projects and program areas receiving federal, state, and local funding, including pavements, bridges, upgrades, freight, safety, congestion mitigation and air quality (CMAQ), transportation alternatives program (TAP), railroad crossings, planning, State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) payments, preventative maintenance and operations, and public transportation.\textsuperscript{31} STIP only includes projects for which there is committed funding available, and therefore, is financially constrained. The funding for these projects is primarily federal funding, with the required state matching funds and in many cases the federal funding is only eligible for specific categories of improvements.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28} SCDHEC - Creating Active Communities
  \item \textsuperscript{29} SC Complete Streets - BikeLeague
  \item \textsuperscript{30} STIP - Overview
  \item \textsuperscript{31} SCDOT - STIP
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
II. 2040 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (MTP)

The 2012 MAP-21 and the 2015 FAST Act requires state transportation plans to focus on a performance-based, outcome-driven planning process. South Carolina’s 2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan update addresses the enhanced federal performance-based planning and programming requirements by providing a 20-year vision for improving future condition, performance, and accessibility of transportation infrastructure and services that enhance the mobility and economic competitiveness of South Carolina.

III. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)

In 2014, the SCDHEC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity and Eat Smart Move More South Carolina worked with six local communities to implement strategies that increased opportunities for active travel. Lessons learned were used to develop a beginner’s guide for communities that want to create a more active environment. The Grassroots Guide is not a policy but rather acts as a how-to resource for communities that want to increase opportunities for physical activity within the built environment. The goal is for community partners to work collaboratively with local partners and other diverse stakeholders to assess community needs and develop policy, systems, and environmental changes that support an active environment.

IV. Complete Streets

The current Complete Streets Policy in South Carolina consists of a 16-year-old resolution expressing that “bicycling and walking accommodations should be a routine part of the department’s planning, design, construction and operating activities.” Over the last 16 years, South Carolina does not have a record of making bicycling and walking a routine part of transportation. The South Carolina legislature or DOT should adopt a Complete Streets policy that builds upon the existing resolution, as many leading states have done. The best states for Complete Streets have an iterative approach to Complete Streets policy and have adopted multiple policies on the road to implementation. Staff at the DOT should be dedicated to implementing the resolution.32

Case Study: Myrtle Beach Complete Streets

The Myrtle Beach community has successfully passed a Complete Streets ordinance. This initiative demonstrates how a coalition of supporters built broad community backing and overcame resistance from certain stakeholders, and how support has grown since the policies were implemented. The push to pass a Complete Streets policy came from several directions. First, there was high demand from residents and tourists for walking and bicycling. Also, Myrtle Beach is striving to be known as a sports tourism destination and being able to walk and bicycle is important for competitive and recreational athletes and spectators. Finally, the Mayor’s

32 SC Complete Streets - BikeLeague
Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets was issued by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx in January 2015. Foxx challenged mayors to raise the bar for bicycle and pedestrian safety, which is when the Myrtle Beach Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee launched a campaign to pass the city’s first Complete Streets policy. Myrtle Beach is now working to develop cohesive rules and regulations for accommodating people bicycling and walking on the streets. The city is also making a big push to educate tourists and residents about sharing the road safely with all modes, creating brochures in four different languages, and producing an informational insert that will go out with utility bills.33

*Case Study: Bike Walk Columbia*

In recent years, the City of Columbia and partners have taken steps to improve its multi-modal network and advance the culture of bicycling and walking and transit. Examples include additions to the Three Rivers Greenway, the completion of Phase I of the Vista Greenway, installation of bicycle corrals and the first HAWK pedestrian signal in South Carolina, as well as successful programs like Bike and Walk to School Day, “handlebar happy hours,” and the creation of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). The Central Midlands Council of Governments partnered with the City of Columbia to develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and Bike Share Plan, called Walk Bike Columbia, with funding provided in part by the Federal Transit Administration, Palmetto Health, and Abacus Planning. The planning process kicked off in May 2014, and the Walk Bike Columbia Plan was adopted by City Council as a component of the Comprehensive Plan in May of 2015. The project recommends a network of complete streets for the City of Columbia, as well as biking and walking related programs and policies. As a result of the planning process and Plan adoption, in October of 2015 Columbia was the first nationally designated Walk Friendly Community in South Carolina.34

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33 Safe Routes Partnership - SC Case Study
34 Bike Walk Columbia Master Plan
Virginia State and Local Transportation Policies

According to The League of American Bicyclists, the state of Virginia ranked 9th in regards to their bicycle friendliness. This is the highest ranking of any of the states included in this review. Virginia scored well for its policies and programs, infrastructure and funding mechanisms, and evaluation and planning. The state mainly needs improvement in legislation and enforcement of bike policies (which may be improving due to recent legislation), and education efforts outside the state's department of transportation. Virginia has created a new bicycle and pedestrian plan both within the last decade, with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) taking a key role in providing project planning, design, and funding guidance to municipalities.

The state has a comprehensive statewide transportation plan, alongside a robust Complete Streets requirement in infrastructure planning, and a heavily utilized Safe Routes to School Program. While lower on the per capita spending of FHWA funding than other states, Virginia is quickly expanding its ridership and capacity along with it. With multiple wealthier municipalities with robust bike networks like Richmond and Alexandria, Virginia has many resources within their DOT for smaller localities to emulate these successes and push for improvement in active transportation alternatives.

I. Statewide Transportation Plan (VTRANS 2035)

The First VTRANS plan was initially adopted in 2004 as Virginia’s comprehensive statewide transportation plan. It is prepared by the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment for the Commonwealth Transportation Board. This plan provides the overarching goals for improving transportation in the Commonwealth and provides additional plans to achieve this vision. It has been recently updated in 2021 and will soon be updated for 2040. It includes itemized analysis of each component of state transportation infrastructure, laying out some major projects/programs in each area.

One of the highlighted major issues for the state to address in the future is to increase integration of bicycles with rail and other transit methods. With the goal of increasing the feasibility of cycling as a legitimate mode of transportation, the state plans to install bicycle racks on buses, increase safe bicycle storage facilities, and allow bikes on trains during peak use times.

The VTRANS 2035 explicitly highlights the programs below as being some of the major programs involved in improving active transportation proliferation throughout the Commonwealth.

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35 [League of American Bicyclists](#)
36 [Virginia New Bike Bill](#)
37 [VTRANS 2035](#)
II. Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations (Complete Streets)

First adopted in early 2004 by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations, known colloquially as Complete Streets, requires the VDOT to “initiate all highway construction projects with the presumption that the projects shall accommodate bicycling and walking.” 

The Complete Streets initiative must be considered (and subsequently included) in every project, with the following list of exceptions:

1. Scarcity of population, travel, and attractors, both existing and future, indicate an absence of need for such accommodations
2. Environmental or social impacts outweigh the need for these accommodations
3. Safety would be compromised
4. Total cost of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations to the appropriate system (i.e., interstate, primary, secondary, or urban system) would be excessively disproportionate to the need for the facility
5. Purpose and scope of the specific project do not facilitate the provision of such accommodations (e.g., projects for the Rural Rustic Road Program)
6. Bicycle and pedestrian travel is prohibited by state or federal laws

III. Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Program

Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Bicycle and Pedestrian Program has provided planning assistance to state and local transportation planners since it was established in the late 1970s. At VDOT, the program plays a leadership role in advancing bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout Virginia. This program is within the VDOT's Transportation and Mobility Division as a part of the Multimodal Section

Case Study: Virginia Capital Trail

The Virginia Capital Trail was officially fully-operational in 2015 as the result of a public-private partnership between the VDOT and the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation. This trail has been incredibly successful as a tourism and revenue generator for the area it runs through. In fiscal year 2018-2019 the trail generated a combined state and local tax revenue of $613,000. In the same year it was projected to produce about $3.6 million in labor income. The 55-mile trail runs from inner Richmond up towards the Governor’s Mansion in Williamsburg. The measured direct and estimated indirect economic effects have proceeded initial projections, and the trail has been found to have a strong impact on recreation and tourism in the Capital area.

References:
Complete Streets
Economic Impact Report Virginia Capital Trail
**Case Study: Virginia Creeper Trail**

The Virginia Creeper Trail is a 34-mile rails-to-trails project completed initially 1984 as a result of a public-private partnership. The trail is open for primarily recreational use, but it also hosts numerous community events and races. The trail is open for bikers, pedestrians, and equestrians, and runs on the grounds of an old coal rail track. Since the rail line ceased operation, it was developed as a trail by the nearby towns of Abingdon and Damascus Virginia, with assistance from the United States Forest Service and National Parks Service. The trail sees more than a quarter million visitors annually (as of 2018), and supports a local community of businesses including restaurants, shuttle services, campgrounds, hotels, and bike outfitters.\(^40\)

**IV. Virginia Safe Routes to School**

The Virginia Safe Routes to School program is designed to increase the number of K-8 students who can safely walk and bike to school. Since the program began in Virginia in 2006 it has had more than a $13.3 million dollar apportionment in its first five years of implementation, awarding $5.7 million during that same time frame towards projects. Project types include bicycle education programs, improvements to street crossings, bike parking facilities, pedestrian signaling mechanisms, construction of multi-modal paths, and plan development for the program. The program funded 50 different projects in the first 3 years following its introduction (2007-2009).

The VDOT website states the purpose of SRTS program is to:

1. Enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. Make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age
3. Facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution near schools

**V. Virginia Statewide Bicycle Plan**

Completed in 2011, the Virginia statewide bicycle plan lays out how the Commonwealth will better integrate bicycles into its multimodal transportation networks.\(^41\) “The purpose of this Plan is to establish a vision for the future of bicycling in the Commonwealth and to advance the bicycle element of the Policy consistently, appropriately, and cost-effectively.”

This plan has four recommendations for the VDOT to implement into future bike-ped policy:

1. Clarify policies for bicycle accommodations.

\(^40\) [Virginia Creeper Trail]
\(^41\) [VDOT Bike Policy Plan]
2. Provide staff training and guidance to integrate the Policy requirements in projects and programs.
3. Improve outreach and coordination on bicycle opportunities.
4. Measure and evaluate progress.

VI. Virginia Statewide Pedestrian Plan

Completed in 2014, the Virginia statewide pedestrian plan looks at expanding pedestrian network proliferation through both urban and rural areas in the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{42} This plan has four recommendations for the VDOT to implement into future bike-ped policy, which exactly mirror those from the bike plan. This plan was created to enhance safety of pedestrians in the Commonwealth and reduce the number of pedestrian related crashes. The goal is to shape policy more effectively for pedestrians within the VDOT, and provide resources and an overview on procedures, programs, and policy implementations to other stakeholders throughout the state.

\textsuperscript{42} Virginia Statewide Pedestrian Plan
Georgia State and Local Transportation Policies

According to The League of American Bicyclists, the state of Georgia ranked 19th for their bicycle friendliness. This is higher than North Carolina’s ranking of 22nd and South Carolina’s ranking of 40th, but lower than Virginia in 9th place. Georgia scored well in terms of policies and programs but needed improvement in funding and implementation. While Georgia’s bicycle and pedestrian plan is outdated, many of the cities and municipalities within the state have their own comprehensive and regionally coordinated plans on how to improve active transportation within their communities. Furthermore, Georgia has implemented a Complete Streets Policy and allocates more than two percent of their federal funds on active transportation. The report cites that the state of Georgia spends $2.70 per capita of FHWA funding on bicycle and pedestrian projects. This is slightly higher than North Carolina’s $2.54 per capita.43

Funding for active transportation in Georgia comes from a variety of sources at the federal, state, and local level. At the local level, communities can utilize their local capital budget, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), bonds, Community Improvement Districts, and Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) in order to implement a more bike-friendly environment. While state funding is more restrictive in its applications, there are still opportunities for bicycle improvements. Georgia’s state constitution limits the use of state motor fuel taxes to the construction of roads and bridges. Since bicycle lanes and shoulders are on roads and bridges, there is room for state funds to be eligible for such projects. Federal funding for active transportation, as is the case across all states, comes from TAP allocations.44 Georgia has many statewide and long-range plans that outline how this funding is used and which projects are prioritized for implementation.

I. Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The Georgia STIP is a four-year transportation and capital improvements program that lists all federally-funded transportation projects located outside MPO boundaries. Each MPO in Georgia will develop its own TIP to be approved by the Governor and referenced in the STIP. The current STIP is effective from 2021 to 2024 and includes projects ranging from highway, bridge, public transit, bike, pedestrian, railroad, and other improvements.45

In FY 2022, Georgia received nine federal TAP grants totaling over $4.5 million that were allocated to projects focused on the development of multi-use trails, sidewalk improvements, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and streetscape improvements across the state. However, TAP funds are restricted to areas of the state that have a population of less than 200,000 people.46

43 [League of American Bicyclists](#)
44 [GA Bike Funding](#)
45 [GDOT STIP](#)
46 [Georgia TAP Funding](#)
II. Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan (SSTP)

As required by Senate Bill 200 (SB 200) passed in 2009, the SSTP provides the state with an intermodal, comprehensive, fiscally constrained transportation plan that outlines the strategic business case for increasing transportation investment in the state. The SSTP is required to be updated every two years and the most current plan became effective in 2021. By focusing on investments and innovation, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) hopes to utilize these plans to improve freight and logistics, advance mobility for people in metro Atlanta, and increase access to jobs, goods, and services across the state.47

III. Statewide Transportation Plan (SWTP)

Due to federal regulations, states must have a multimodal long-range transportation plan that spans at least 20 years into the future. Georgia’s SWTP is currently looking towards a “horizon year” of 2050 to assess the performance of all transportation modes in the state. The SWTP also provides a forecast of potential funding for statewide transportation programs and helps to provide the GDOT with guidance on how to meet future transportation demand. 48

IV. Georgia Bicycle Safety Action Plan (BSAP)

In 2018, Georgia Bikes created the BSAP to provide guidance to the GDOT and other law enforcement agencies on the current state of bicycle safety and the importance of future investments in active transportation. The report contextualizes the current state of bicycling in the state of Georgia and identifies high priority counties, cities, and corridors that need to improve bicycle safety. In doing so, it outlines key issues connected to bicycling such as accessibility and equity, economic improvement, public health, and the environment. 49

V. Complete Streets

The GDOT adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2012 that established certain requirements to be met in transportation projects that would accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes. In order to omit such accommodations, approval must be given from the GDOT Chief Engineer.50

Case Study: ARC’s “Walk. Bike. Thrive!”

47 GDOT SSTP
48 GDOT SWTP
49 Georgia BSAP
50 GDOT Complete Streets
The Atlanta Regional Commission is a planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the metropolitan Atlanta area. It consists of a 41-member board and includes 11 member counties in the region. The agency recently finalized a Bike-Pedestrian Plan entitled “Walk. Bike. Thrive!” that provides the region with an active transportation strategy and tools for local communities to create more pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly spaces. The plan includes five key strategies centered around investing in activity centers, addressing safety and equity concerns, coordinating with transit providers, developing the regional trail system, and working closely with local communities to identify barriers to active transportation. As part of the ARC’s efforts to work with these communities, the plan outlines policies that help to support walking and bicycling, funding resources for active transportation projects, marketing ideas, and suggestions for evaluation and monitoring of projects. In implementing these strategies, Atlanta hopes to become one of the most connected and safest regions in the country for active transportation.\footnote{ARC Walk. Bike. Thrive!}

Case Study: Bike Walk Savannah

In 2008, Bike Walk Savannah was formed in order to advocate for better bicycling facilities and encourage residents to make bicycling a bigger part of their lives. In 2018, Bike Walk changed their mission to advocate for a Complete Streets vision and become more inclusive of all transportation options. Bike Walk Savannah has played a large role in making Savannah second in the state of Georgia for its bicycling community and ninth in the South for the percentage of its population that gets to work by bike. Recent notable projects include securing $1 million in SPLOST funding for Tide To Town in 2019, the completion of Phase 2A of the Truman Linear Park Trail in 2020, and the completion of the Police Memorial Trail in 2021. The organization provides a map of extensive bicycling infrastructure throughout the city, which also includes trails from the East Coast Greenway and US Bike Route 1.\footnote{Bike Walk Savannah}
Stories of Impact

From Moose to Manatee - EAST COAST GREENWAY

Durham’s American Tobacco Trail is just one vein of the much larger East Coast Greenway, sandwiched on either side by hundreds of miles of interconnected trail, road, paved path, and gravel that allows non-motorized transport from the Canadian border at Calais, Maine, to Key West, Florida. ECG was founded in 1991 when bike advocates and city planners from Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. came together at a conference with a vision to connect their independent greenways. The dream was to create a 3,000-mile contiguous path coursing down the entire coast to encourage non-motorized travel for work and recreation. Headquartered locally in Durham, NC, it is designed to transform the 15 states and 450 communities it connects through active and healthy lifestyles, sustainable transportation, community engagement, and more.

The project is spearheaded by the East Coast Greenway Alliance, a nonprofit organization. Although the Alliance itself does not build the trail, it promotes the vision for connecting local trails and provides strategic assistance for states, counties, and municipalities that do build trails.

Roughly 1,000 miles of segmented trails have been completed with sections stretching up and down the coast. Visitor numbers continue to increase rapidly, making ECG America’s most visited park with more than 50 million bike riders, runs, and walks last year alone. In 2020, the Greenway welcomed an average of nearly 137,000 trips per day - a boom of over 50 percent more riders than the year prior, due in large part to the pandemic. ECG does not see the bounty of pandemic-era trips as a fleeting phase, though. Rather, it is their aim to convert those people to regular users of the Greenway.

The ECG segment in the Research Triangle region connects four counties in a nearly 70-mile spine that links to many other trail systems throughout the region. The implementation of a well-connected trail system in RTP encourages a shift from energy intensive modes of transportation to active modes of transportation. A growing body of literature links parks and trails to increased physical activity, decreased healthcare costs, and improved air quality. The ECG 2021 Impact Report found that ECG generates $90 million in total benefits annually for the Triangle region, from gains in health and the environment to transportation and access benefits, economic gains, and increased property value.

As the organization works towards someday creating a fully protected, coast-spanning Greenway – where riders, walkers, joggers, and the like don’t have to worry about riding on public roads,
competing with the potential hazards of motorized traffic – the Alliance has set lofty financial and timeline benchmarks. Their funding mechanisms are unique, primarily pulling from two buckets: private funding through donations and government transportation funds and grants. The Alliance functions as a non-profit and generates funds from individual donations and foundation funding (used to fund the Alliance itself). Public-funding is funneled toward the development of greenway segments - land acquisition, planning, execution, engineering, environmental assessment, etc. This funding mechanism is fairly uniform across the whole project. The second bucket, government funding, is more complicated and varies from state-to-state. ECG straddles the designation between recreational trail and active transportation projects. In North Carolina, they are recognized as a state trail, which adds several layers of complication. State trails were allocated funding for the first time in the last budget cycle. At the present time, they received a non-recurring fund of roughly $19 million as part of the Complete the Trails Fund. ECG is mostly paved greenways, not natural surface trails, making it ineligible for most Complete the Trails funds and forcing them to be creative with their funding. As part of the active transportation, ECG must also compete against funding for roads for state investments in the STIP funding process.
Weaving Communities Together - CAROLINA THREAD TRAIL

Spanning 15 counties across North and South Carolina sits a regional network of trails, greenways, and blueways connecting nearly three million people to the outdoors. These trails are weavings of a larger system known as the Carolina Thread Trail, which was established in 2008 with the purpose of connecting people to the natural world and the communities around them. The vision began in 2005, when leaders from the Carolinas met to discuss the region’s most pressing environmental needs and produced the concept that would become the Carolina Thread Trail. What started as a 500-mile concept map expanded to include a vision of 1600 miles, with 400 completed and 200 more expected in the next five years.

Led by the Catawba Lands Conservancy, the Thread Trail works to provide support, funding, and expertise to communities in the planning and implementation of their trails. In doing so, they bring many benefits to the communities they connect, ranging from economic development, recreation, health and wellness, water quality, and much more.

Nestled on the border of North and South Carolina, Mecklenburg County stands out for its successful partnership with the Carolina Thread Trail. In Mecklenburg County, where the conservancy is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, there are 26 miles of trails in place with an estimated 450,000 users per year. Over the next five years, the county is expected to see 56 new miles of trails constructed through at least $171 million in investments. Mecklenburg County is unique in that it is constructing 10-foot-wide paved greenways in an effort to create an alternative transportation network to be used as a means for commuting, rather than just recreation.

However, not all communities can find the same success as Mecklenburg County, and many of the obstacles Carolina Thread Trail partners face are the result of funding restraints. Completing funding requests is a very complicated and prolonged process that many communities do not have the resources or energy to pursue. Furthermore, several communities do not have the necessary funding to fulfill the local match for TAP money, especially for higher-cost projects. Some local governments run into roadblocks even after securing funding. When using federal funding, localities are subjected to federal transportation requirements for managing and implementing the project. There is often not enough time or resources to learn these federal processes, which can lead to the staff in these smaller municipalities putting bicycle-pedestrian projects on the backburner.

This is where Carolina Thread Trail comes in. While the organization does not build the trails, they can provide support to smaller municipalities in planning and managing the projects as well as in securing funding. By utilizing private partnerships and fundraising in addition to local, state, and federal funds, Carolina Thread Trail helps to provide grants to localities, both for the design and planning of projects as well as reaching local match goals. When such a grant is not
possible, Carolina Thread Trail will work with those communities to help find funding sources, whether through bonds or other state or federal level programs.

The Town of Marshville, North Carolina is a prime example of the impact that Carolina Thread Trail is having throughout the region. Marshville has a population of 2,700 people with no official parks system or greenway system, but the town manager, Franklin Deese, had a vision to make Marshville a healthier, more walkable community. Deese applied for and won several grants from Carolina Thread Trail to help build pedestrian trails connecting the town’s schools to parks with a variety of fitness opportunities. Now, Marshville’s 1.8-mile walking trail is one thread of a much larger web working to promote public health and restore connectivity between people and place.
**Inspiring Advocacy and Change - BIKE WALK NC**

In 2013, the North Carolina legislature passed the Strategic Transportation Investments law which effectively made it illegal for the North Carolina Department of Transportation to directly spend state dollars on new “standalone” bike-pedestrian projects, only allowing exceptions for improvements on already existing projects. This change initially blindsided many advocates for active transportation alternative projects, casting doubts on the future of bike-ped projects in the state. As one of the biggest advocacy organizations promoting non-motorized transportation choices for NC tourists and residents, BikeWalk NC has had changing this law in its sights for some time now.

BikeWalk’s mission aims to “inspire and support advocacy” throughout the state to create an equitable and accommodating environment for both bicyclists and the pedestrians they share their trails with. Its promotion of this environment is for a multitude of reasons, namely improving health and recreation, while also impacting travel. Bike Walk represents and advocates for a broad coalition of stakeholders, ranging from shop owners and cycling clubs to elected officials, business groups, and other allied nonprofits. In the past four years it has been working with both the Governor’s office and partners in the NC general assembly in order to change the STI, with efforts failing in the state senate. BikeWalk is not advocating for any specific amount of money being contributed to bike-ped projects, but rather to allow these projects to compete with the other projects in the NCDOT funding prioritization process.

One of BikeWalk’s major goals is to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, especially when looking at multi-use roadways. The STI limitation is making it difficult for safety improvements and safer engineering techniques to be implemented in projects. This is especially relevant during the Coronavirus pandemic, in which biking and walking surged, and the lack of safe facilities for this recreational activity was more apparent than ever. These patterns of increased usage make it even more crucial for the relevant part of STI to be modified in order to help increase safety and reduce accidents involving bicyclists and pedestrians.

Additionally, BikeWalk serves as an advocate to smaller communities for creating bike-ped projects in their location. Typically, it does not have to sell them too hard on the benefits, the difficulty comes with getting the 20 percent State/Local match to qualify for federal funding for a project. This price tag can be very high, and difficult for a municipality or smaller community to be able to reach, especially since virtually no funding is coming from the state due to the STI provision. BikeWalk tries to direct communities to find other available funds for these matches, including through other federal grant programs like the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality improvement program (CMAQ), or even bonds, toll credits, and Municipal Service District funding.
BikeWalk serves as an advocate primarily, seeing that bike-ped projects have been penalized unfairly, and remain unprioritized in part due to NCDOT funding woes. BikeWalk advocates that these issues were not caused by bike-ped projects being funded, and therefore concludes that these projects should not be deprioritized because of an unrelated issue. Despite issues in getting the NC legislature to repeal this section of the STI and allow bike-ped projects to compete, BikeWalk remains steadfast in its mission to advocate and inspire others to do the same.
Recommendations and Next Steps

Active transportation in North Carolina suffers from many legislative and organizational barriers that are restricting the implementation of bicycle-pedestrian projects. From the lack of state funding opportunities to highway-centric project prioritization, there are many opportunities for NCAH to get involved in mitigating the impacts of bicycle-pedestrian barriers. With many smaller municipalities struggling with a lack of resources and an inability to produce enough interest in active transportation, it will be critical for advocacy organizations to center their efforts around the education and promotion of bicycle-pedestrian benefits. Most importantly, communities must receive support in securing the 20 percent local match for TAP funding. Some organizations, such as the Carolina Thread Trail, award their own grant money to municipalities as well as assist communities in finding other grant or bond opportunities to fulfill their local match. In an effort to get more involved in active transportation, NCAH could play a similar role by working with smaller municipalities to create a financial and strategic plan for implementing bicycle-pedestrian projects.

Furthermore, it will be important for state governments to provide better funding opportunities to local communities for the implementation of active infrastructure. In North Carolina specifically, it will be critical to change the language in the STI to allow for state funding for standalone bicycle-pedestrian projects. In order for these changes to happen, advocacy organizations must play a role in garnering public support and lobbying elected officials to place a greater priority on investing in active lifestyles. This presents an opportunity for NCAH to partner with organizations such as BikeWalk NC that are already dedicated to lobbying elected officials and advocating for policy change. As part of this process, it is important that all stakeholders are educated not only on the potential for economic development and a thriving sense of community, but also on the public health benefits. Thus, it is recommended that NCAH take advantage of partnerships with other organizations to offer their expertise and help frame the public health narrative as it relates to active transportation.

Ultimately, the key to improving and creating a successful network of active transportation in North Carolina will lie in the ability of planning and advocacy efforts to secure better funding opportunities and better project prioritization.