

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



State Recreational Trails Program

Purpose and History

Appropriations are made from the infrastructure budget for the State Recreational Trails Program (RTP) managed by the Department of Transportation (DOT). During the 1987 Legislative Session, the General Assembly created the State Recreational Trails Program, now codified in Iowa Code chapter [465B](#). The intent was for the state to acquire and develop 2,000 miles of new recreational trails and complete existing trails before the year 2000. As of 2012, the DOT estimates the trail system to be approximately 1,800 miles. This includes developed multiuse recreational trails and off-road paths throughout the state, but does not include the trails owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in state parks.

There are other funding sources for trails in addition to the State Recreational Trails Program. For example, the DOT administers three main trail programs that provide funding for trail development, including the State Recreational Trails Program, the federal Recreational Trails Program, and the federal Transportation Alternatives Program. The DNR also administers programs and funds grants the Resource Enhancement and Protection Fund and the Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicles Grant programs. In addition, trails receive 10.0% of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund (Iowa Code section [461.37](#)). As of December 2015, the Trust Fund has not received additional resources. Trail funding is also available through grant programs such as the Community Attraction and Tourism Program under the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

State Recreational Trails Program Grants

Grants funded through the State Recreational Trails Program require a minimum local match of 25.0%. Trails that receive funding must be maintained for public use for a minimum of 20 years. State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Applications for funding are submitted to the DOT Office of Systems Planning. The DOT provides recommendations for projects to the Transportation Commission for approval.

Funding requests generally exceed the available resources. For example, for the FY 2015 July funding cycle, the DOT received 43 applications requesting a total amount of \$23.4 million. At times, the General Assembly has directed a portion of the funding for specified projects. These projects bypass the normal application and approval process by the Transportation Commission.

State Funding

Initial funding from the infrastructure budget for the State Recreational Trails Program was made during the 1996 Legislative Session. The initial RIIF appropriation was \$1.0 million for FY 1997. With the exception of FY 2005 and FY 2011, funding has been appropriated to the State Recreational Trails Program each fiscal year. This does not include funding received by other state trail programs. For instance, the federal trail program managed by the DOT received \$12.0 million in FY 2011 that is not reflected.

Funding for trails in the infrastructure budget has been provided at varying levels from the RIIF and other infrastructure funds, including the Restricted Capital Fund (RCF) and the Endowment for Iowa's Health Restricted Capitals Fund (RC2). Between FY 1997 and FY 2015, appropriations to the DOT for the State Recreational Trails Program from the infrastructure budget totaled \$43.4 million, averaging \$2.3 million annually for those years. This amount includes two fiscal years, FY 1998 and FY 1999, when \$1.0 million was appropriated each year for completion of trail connections between existing trails and parks within the system.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [465B](#)
[761](#) Iowa Administrative Code chapter [165](#)

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More Information

Department of Transportation – State Recreational Trails Programs:
http://www.iowadot.gov/systems_planning/fedstate_rectrails.htm

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>

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