



May 11, 2017

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

We, the undersigned members of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), thank you for your past support of programs to connect children and youth with the outdoors, especially through active transportation and recreation. As you begin consideration of the fiscal year 2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD), and Related Agencies Appropriations measure, we urge you to continue your commitment to community development and support robust funding for the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and multimodal transportation options, including the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program.

OAK is a national strategic partnership of nearly 100 businesses and organizations representing more than 60 million Americans, with a common interest in connecting children, youth, and families with the outdoors. OAK supports public policies and investments that expand outdoor and environmental education opportunities, promote community health and wellness, and engage more youth in environmental stewardship.

CDBG and TIGER are both versatile funding sources, which generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe and accessible transportation and recreation opportunities for communities, both urban and rural. For instance, every dollar of CDBG investment leverages \$3.65 in additional local funding.

Further, the Outdoor Industry Association reports that outdoor recreation contributes \$887 billion annually to the U.S. economy while supporting more than seven million jobs covering every corner of the country. Actions taken now to create more opportunities for kids, youth, and families to be active in the outdoors will make an essential contribution to this growing economic sector by creating jobs and increasing recreation and tourism spending that supports the local, regional and national economies, with the added benefits of improving children's health and creating the next generation of stewards and champions of our public lands.

We understand that we are in difficult fiscal times, but balancing the budget at the expense of programs and initiatives that ensure children and youth have opportunities to learn, get physically active, and develop valuable work and life skills in the outdoors will be a detriment to our nation. Specifically, we request that the THUD Subcommittee continue to fund the following programs at the ***final fiscal year 2017 amount in fiscal year 2018:***

The Department of Transportation:

- TIGER program at \$500 million. TIGER projects include multi-modal and active transportation projects which significantly enhance safety, walkability, and non-motorized mobility in local communities.
- Further, we ask you continue to prioritize existing authorized multimodal transportation programs as keys to healthy and safe communities and maximize and leverage their impact – both on federal lands where people recreate and in local communities where they live, work, and play.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development:

- CDBG formula funding at \$3 billion. These grants support local community development activities aimed at neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and improvement of community facilities, such as parks and recreation. Four-out-of-five Americans now live in or near a metropolitan area. Fully functional park systems play an essential role in a community's ability to attract business investments and tourism dollars. Access to quality park and recreation opportunities also positively impacts public health and provides for cost-effective and nonregulatory means of addressing environmental and conservation concerns.

OAK is working towards a future where all children, youth, and families have safe and readily available opportunities to connect with the outdoors. Moving forward, OAK will continue to advance initiatives that get every child active, healthy and outdoors by working closely with federal, congressional, state, and local partners. OAK is also committed to celebrating diversity, working towards equity, and practicing inclusion in all of our work.

We would be honored to meet with you at your convenience to discuss our recommendations. We look forward to working with you to further efforts to ensure all kids and families have the access, opportunities, skills and encouragement to experience our public lands and natural world. For questions about this request or to schedule a meeting please contact OAK steering committee member, Dave Tyahla of the National Recreation and Park Association at dtyahla@nrpa.org or 202-460-0880.

We thank you for considering our request and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Childhood
American Society of Landscape Architects

Association for Experiential Education
Avid4 Adventure

Big City Mountaineers
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
California Outdoor Engagement Coalition
Children & Nature Network
Conservation Legacy
Discover Outdoors
GirlTrek Inc.
Great Basin Institute
Hipcamp
IslandWood
Kids4Trees
Latino Outdoors
National Interscholastic Cycling Association
National Recreation and Park Association

NatureBridge
O'Neill Sea Odyssey
Outdoor Outreach
Outdoors Empowered Network
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Sierra Club
SOS Outreach
The Corps Network
The North Face
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
Transforming Youth Outdoors
YMCA of the USA

CC: Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies