



*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.*

**TO** Ohio House State and Local Government Committee  
**FROM** Brian Housh, Midwest Policy Manager, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
**DATE** February 13, 2018  
**RE:** SCR 15 – 2018 “Ohio’s Year of the Trails”

Dear Members of the Ohio State Assembly,

On behalf of all Ohioans, I strongly encourage you to support the passage of SCR 15 designating 2018 as “Ohio’s Year of the Trails”. This resolution was introduced by the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus, a bipartisan group of state-elected officials committed to connecting Ohioans via a statewide trail network, and passed by the Senate unanimously in December of 2017. This legislation raises awareness of and celebrates our state's extensive trails networks, including the "nation's largest paved trail network" located in the Miami Valley, the 1400+-mile Buckeye Trail, the almost completed 300+-mile Ohio to Erie Trail connecting Cleveland to Cincinnati and linking 22 regional trails, and the many other trail systems that span the Buckeye State and bring so much to Ohioans and visitors.

The Year of the Trails provides important opportunities for Chambers, CVBs, businesses, local elected officials and trail groups to promote Ohio and their communities as trail destinations with important amenities for visitors, not to mention the economic, health and environmental benefits that recreational and active transportation trail networks bring to communities across our state. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's April 7th Opening Day for Trails will kick off various events happening around the state, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is collaborating with TourismOhio, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Trails Partnership to help connect residents and visitors to Ohio's multi-use, hiking, water, mountain biking and equestrian trails so that they can actively participate in events and support trail organizations. I encourage all of our state legislators to join their constituents on the trail on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

The February 28<sup>th</sup> celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ohio’s Scenic Rivers Act will feature SCR 15, highlighting the importance of water (and other) trails in expanding smart transportation options, fueling strong businesses and economies, encouraging the improvement of public health, enhancing regional competitiveness and promoting social equity. These benefits create good jobs that retain and attract talented individuals as well as enhance quality of life for all Ohioans who love trails and recognize the importance of developing our recreational and active transportation trail systems.

Ohio should continue to be a leader with regard to trail infrastructure, and SCR 15 is an important recognition of the importance of trails to our citizens and the continued success of our state. Notably, the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus is partnering with ODNR to develop a comprehensive online trail map that continually collects and consolidates Ohio's trails data, which will support initiatives to develop a new State Trail Plan and to conduct a statewide economic impact study that will direct strategies to promote healthy and vibrant communities.

Thank you for your consideration & Best regards,

Brian K. Housh  
Midwest Policy Manager/Council President  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy/Village of Yellow Springs