

## **Quotes from Endorsed Organizations the *Transit to Trails Act***

“Throughout the country, black and brown people have disproportionately suffered a lack of parks and green space, while bearing the brunt of higher levels of pollution in their air and water,” **said Sharon Musa, Policy and Recreation Partnerships Fellow at The Wilderness Society.** “The Transit to Trails Act is an important step toward improving the health and well-being of millions of people by making outdoor experiences in nature accessible. This legislation is literally a breath of fresh air for communities struggling with obesity, asthma, diabetes, and other illnesses related to inactivity.”

“The benefits of spending time in nature are universal. Sadly, access to nature is anything but,” **said Jackie Ostfeld, Director of Sierra Club’s Outdoors for All campaign.** “Years of disinvestment and failed policies have cut off too many communities, especially working-class communities and communities of color, of the ability to reach our national parks and public lands. This bill will help break down those transportation barriers so that all people can enjoy the outdoors, not just the privileged few.”

“The Transit to Trails Act ensures our public lands are accessible to park-poor communities by funding transportation access to our natural resources,” **said Mark Magana, Founding President & CEO of GreenLatinos.** “Due to decades of inequitable planning practices, only a third of Latinos live within walking distance of a park, and our neighborhoods are more likely to lack access to walking and biking infrastructure. As a result Latinos have lower rates of physical activity and suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases like obesity, asthma, and heart disease. I applaud this legislation by Congressman Jimmy Gomez and Senator Cory Booker for facilitating environmental justice by reducing barriers between people and access to nature.”

“Everyone should be able to benefit from our public lands, waters and parks. For too long a lack of infrastructure has denied entry to low-income communities and Black and Latinx people,” **said Nicole Ghio, Senior Fossil Fuels Program Manager for Friends of the Earth.** “This legislation is an important step to ensuring everyone has access to nature.”

“The American Hiking Society praises the reintroduction of the Transit to Trails Act by Rep. Jimmy Gomez, which will expand access to public lands for underserved communities by reducing transportation barriers,” **said Kate Van Waes, Executive Director of American Hiking Society.** “Rep. Gomez's legislation will make sure that the communities that need them most will be able to access trails, parks, and open spaces. Congress must swiftly pass this legislation as part of transportation and infrastructure legislation.”

“While the beautiful state of California has a wealth of public lands, we must acknowledge that these lands are not equally accessible to all residents of the state,” **said André Sanchez, San Joaquin Valley Organizer for the California Wilderness Coalition.** “This is, unfortunately, the case for both urban and rural communities that are immediately adjacent to public lands. The introduction and eventual implementation of the Transit to Trail Act is an important step in addressing this issue that disproportionality impacts under-resourced communities and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This bill

would prioritize areas of high need and fund transportation services to our public lands. We look forward to working with Congressman Gomez to advance this measure and similar efforts to address equitable access to our treasured public lands.”

“Accessing the outdoors may seem as simple as walking out the front door, but for far too many children, youth and families, the doorway has been effectively blocked by decades of exclusive community planning that ignored their transportation needs,” **said Jayni Rasmussen, Senior Campaign Representative for Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK)**. “Congress can clear the threshold for the 28 million children that currently lack the opportunity to safely walk or roll to a park with the Transit to Trails Act, which will invest in smart planning and accessible pathways to the outdoors for everyone.”

“Nature for All is elated to work with Congressmember Gomez on the Transit to Trails Act - and lead field trips outdoors! In Los Angeles County, 50% of our communities are park-poor,” **said Bryan Matsumoto, Program Manager for Nature For All**. “Nature-deficit disorder is a serious urban issue with rippling societal effects. Poor health and low interest in environmental issues are the result of environmental injustice and disinvestment in underserved communities' access to nature. Transit to Trails programs are powerful, multi-benefit investments that yield great returns - planting the seeds for urban children to keep exploring and become emotionally and physically healthy, curious citizens of the world.”

“The Appalachian Mountain Club is excited to support the reintroduction of The Transit to Trails Act of 2021 to ensure that all communities have not only access to close-to-home recreation and green spaces but also to act as a catalyst for generations to realize their full promise as active outdoor participants and conservation stewards,” **said John Judge, President, and CEO, Appalachian Mountain Club**.

“The Transit to Trails Act would be immensely impactful to the community, environmental, and economic health of Gateway Communities all along the Continental Divide Trail,” **said Andrea Kurth, Gateway Community Program Manager at the Continental Divide Trail Coalition**. “This legislation would create jobs for Gateway Community residents, improve public health, and give underserved communities the opportunity to enjoy the spiritual, physical, and emotional benefits of public lands near their homes. Working with rural mountain communities, we often find that the very people residing near world-class recreational resources like the Continental Divide Trail often face the most significant barriers to experiencing these places for themselves. More than just an investment in transportation, the Transit to Trails Act will be a direct investment in communities that have been chronically barred from experiencing the wonders and healing that can be found in our open lands and waters.”