

NEW SECTION. Sec. _____. FOR THE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

2019-21 – Development of statewide multi-modal trails database

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations:

- (1) The appropriation is provided solely for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to develop an official statewide database of paved and unpaved multi-modal trails that displays a network of local, regional, and state-wide trails that connect, or have the potential of connecting, to provide transportation alternatives while improving Washington State’s health outcomes and overall economic vitality. In developing the database and trails network to help fulfill its state trails plan responsibilities, RCO shall utilize and build upon trails work done by Washington State Parks and local and regional governments, the active transportation plan developed by the Washington State Department of Transportation, and inventorying and mapping efforts already undertaken by non-profit and private organizations.

- (2) Using the existing spatial data collected pursuant to subsection (1), RCO will inventory and map a statewide network of public recreational and commuter routes to facilitate the stewardship of a statewide trails system as a priority asset. The network of trails and the trails database will be developed in a manner that allows RCO to update data on a regular basis in consultation and collaboration with other state agencies, cities, counties, parks and recreation districts, regional governments, and private and non-profit organizations

Appropriation: State Building Construction Account—State.	\$200,000
Prior Biennia (Expenditures).	\$0
Future Biennia (Projected Costs).	\$0
TOTAL.	\$200,000

Senate Bill 5006 (Sen. Van De Wege) House Bill 1025 (Reps. Wicks and Eslick)

Please Pass This Legislation to Provide a Vital Funding Tool for Local Parks Agencies



Parks and recreation investments provide local communities with many benefits. They give us venues for outdoor activities, fresh air, and physical health and well-being - which have never been more important than in the COVID-19 environment in which we find ourselves. They provide low-cost or no-cost, equitable opportunities for all people to recreate, welcoming all races, income levels, and genders. They bring quality of life through open space and facilities and trail networks that make communities more attractive, healthy and vibrant. They help sell homes, create jobs, and fuel economic development.

Investing in and maintaining parks and open spaces takes dedicated and committed funding, which has become more and more challenging for local agencies facing growing maintenance and operations backlogs, facing the perils of property tax pro-rationing in some cases, and seeing event-based and fee-based programming canceled across the board under COVID-19. **SB 5006/HB 1025** is designed to give financially-restricted and COVID-19-impacted local parks agencies a tool they can take to their voters to help them meet growing funding challenges, increased demands, and increasing populations.

It's about **EQUITY** - Not all agencies across the state have the same local funding tools, resulting in areas with low per capita investment in parks in under-served communities. And this tool can help all agencies expand equitable recreation access opportunities for all citizens.

It's about **SURVIVAL** – especially under **COVID-19** -- Diverse funding mechanisms are needed to weather the storm of financial recession; dedicated funding sources are needed to keep pace with growth to ensure lands are conserved and maintained for future generations.

In Fall 2020, the Washington Recreation & Park Association, in collaboration with the Association of Washington Cities (AWC), Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), and Metro Parks Tacoma, completed its most comprehensive survey ever of local parks and recreation agencies. The 74 participating agencies manage over 120,500 acres of park land across the state, accommodating just under 38 million users annually.

The WRPA survey showed local parks agencies suffering from average budget reductions of over 23 percent and drops in earned revenues of about 60 percent. Just as importantly, the survey also found that “COVID-19 has significantly drained operating resources while triggering a heavy increase in demand on the public spaces that offered Washingtonians a safe, healthy respite during the pandemic.” Demand for the passive use of parks and open spaces was **up 65 percent – with one community seeing a 170 percent increase in demand on its parks and trails.**

All this comes on top of a 2018 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and Pennsylvania State University research study which showed that parks and recreation agencies and divisions of local governments **took the heaviest brunt of budget cuts made during the Great Recession (from 2008-2012) and were among the slowest to recover after the Recession.**

At a time when the State of Washington is simply not equipped to provide direct allocations or assistance to local parks agencies, **SB 5006/HB 1025** provides an important tool that agencies can bring to their voters in their local communities. The legislation sponsored by Sen. Kevin Van De Wege (D-24th Dist.) and Reps. Emily Wicks (D-38th Dist.) and Carolyn Eslick (R-39th Dist.) would:

- Provide an important tool for local parks agencies to address gaps in service equity and funding;
- Provide a 1/10th of 1 cent sales tax option, subject to voter approval;
- Allow all types of agencies - city-run, county-run, Metropolitan Parks Districts and Park Districts - to take this option to their voters;
- Allow local park agencies to bond against the revenue;
- Provide tax authority for a fixed period of time -- 10 years - or the length of bonding for those who issue debt backed by the new revenue;
- Include provisions to ensure no double-taxation will occur.



By Senator Nobles

Concerning the use of parks and recreation spaces, trails, and facilities in the design of parks Rx pilot program collaboratively designed with the health care and insurance industry sectors.

1 AN ACT Relating to the use of parks and recreation spaces,
2 trails, and facilities in the design of parks Rx pilot program
3 collaboratively designed with the health care and insurance industry
4 sectors; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that one of the
7 best and most cost-effective ways for the residents of Washington
8 state to achieve physical and mental health, and to prevent costly
9 diseases and conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and
10 other coronary conditions is to get regular exercise and physical
11 activity. In fact, as part of a study done for the recreation and
12 conservation office on the benefits of trail-based activities, the
13 University of Washington conducted a literature review of over 100
14 studies that identify evidence of a close linkage between health
15 benefits and being outdoors. The literature review further found that
16 the health benefits of nature "may be particularly impactful for the
17 12.2 percent who have incomes below the poverty level."

18 (2) The legislature further finds that for all residents, public
19 parks and trails, recreation programs, and open spaces offer
20 equitable, no-cost, or low-cost options for all people to be active

1 and healthy, with these spaces receiving record levels of use during
2 the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 (3) The legislature finds that it can harness the equitable and
4 low-cost or no-cost opportunities provided by parks and recreation
5 spaces, and build upon successful programs established in areas such
6 as the East Bay of California and the state of Tennessee, by
7 establishing a pilot program in Washington state through which parks
8 and recreation officials, health care providers, public and community
9 health advocates, and insurance company representatives can work
10 collaboratively to design a program that will incentivize residents,
11 particularly those from communities experiencing inequities or
12 without ready access to physical fitness facilities, to regularly use
13 public parks and recreation sites, facilities and programs to enable
14 better physical and mental health outcomes, decrease visits to
15 hospitals and clinics, and lower overall insurance costs.

16 (4) It is the legislature's intent to establish a task force to
17 work on designing a pilot program that can be implemented in the
18 Puget Sound area, in eastern Washington, and in southwest Washington.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
20 appropriated for this specific purpose and not to exceed \$100,000,
21 the secretary of health shall convene a task force by August 1, 2021,
22 to assist with the development of a "parks Rx" health and wellness
23 pilot program that can be implemented in the Puget Sound, eastern
24 Washington, and southwest Washington regions of Washington state. The
25 members of the task force must include:

- 26 (a) The secretary of health, or the secretary's designee;
- 27 (b) Two representatives from each of the following groups, to be
28 appointed by the secretary of health:
 - 29 (i) Two representatives of local parks and recreation agencies,
30 from recommendations by the Washington recreation and park
31 association;
 - 32 (ii) Two representatives of health care providers and community
33 health workers, from recommendations by the association of Washington
34 healthcare plans;
 - 35 (iii) Two representatives from hospital and health systems, from
36 recommendations by the Washington state hospital association; and
 - 37 (iv) Two representatives of local public health agencies, from
38 recommendations by the Washington state association of local public
39 health officials; and

1 (c) A representative from the northwest center for public health
2 practice, to be appointed by the secretary of health.

3 (2) The secretary of health or the secretary's designee must
4 chair the task force created in subsection (1) of this section. Staff
5 support for the task force must be provided by the department of
6 health.

7 (3) The task force must meet at least once monthly through
8 November 2021.

9 (4) The duties of the task force are to advise the department of
10 health on issues including, but not limited to, developing:

11 (a) A process to establish a pilot program described in
12 subsection (1) of this section around the state with a focused
13 emphasis on diverse communities and where systematic inequities and
14 discrimination have negatively affected health outcomes;

15 (b) Model agreements that would enable insurers to offer
16 incentives to public, nonprofit, and private employers to create
17 wellness programs that offer employees a discount on health insurance
18 in exchange for a certain usage level of outdoor parks and trails for
19 recreation and physical activity; and

20 (c) Recommendations on ways in which a public-private partnership
21 approach may be utilized to fund the implementation of the pilot
22 program described in subsection (1) of this section.

23 (5) The members of the task force are encouraged to consider
24 grant funding and outside funding options that can be used toward the
25 pilot program.

26 (6) The department of health must report findings and
27 recommendations of the task force to the governor and relevant
28 committees of the legislature in compliance with RCW 43.01.036 by
29 December 1, 2021.

30 (7) Participation on the task force created in subsection (1) of
31 this section is strictly voluntary and without compensation.

32 (8) This section expires December 31, 2021.

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