

# Maryland awards millions for bike paths

By [Ashley Halsey III](#), Wednesday, March 7, 1:51 PM

A bike route that will connect Montgomery County transit stations is one of 20 [bike initiatives](#) that will receive \$2.5 million in funding, the Maryland Department of Transportation announced Wednesday.

The route will connect Montgomery Mall and Bethesda with the expanding [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#). Among the other programs funded are bike routes connecting Prince George's County parks to Bowie Town Center, routes from Columbia to [Fort Meade](#) in Howard County, and creation of a trail linking Maryland's Anacostia Tributary Trail to Riverwalk Trail in the District. The \$1 million for that connection into the District first was announced in November.

Although all of the funding announced Wednesday comes from state coffers, [requirements](#) that states spend a portion of their federal transportation money on bike and pedestrian projects are being [hotly debated](#) this month on [Capitol Hill](#).

States have been required to spend a portion of federal highway funds on bike and pedestrian programs under recent long-term transportation bills, and the mandate has been credited with construction of bike paths, bike lanes, sidewalks and pedestrian improvements. The federal transportation enhancement program amounted to \$927.5 million in fiscal 2011, about 2 percent of the total \$40.2 billion highway budget.

House Republicans eliminated the mandate from their long-term transportation bill, while a bipartisan bill in the Senate initially gave states the option to spend funds designated for transportation enhancement on more pressing needs.

But a Senate amendment that made headway last week would require states to spend 90 percent of the designated money on enhancement programs, allowing the remaining 10 percent to be spent elsewhere if states deemed necessary.

Other bike projects covered in the grant funding announced Wednesday by Maryland include the Chestertown Rail Trail connecting Washington College to the Chestertown business district and waterfront in Kent County on the Eastern Shore; completion of on-road bike links in the city of Frederick; design of the north extension of the BWI Trail to the Nursery Road Light Rail Station; and covered bike racks at Penn and Camden train stations in Baltimore City.

"These grants are a great way to help local jurisdictions make key connections to build a more comprehensive bike network that will benefit our citizens," said Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley (D).