

*Kingston, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program will provide technical assistance to help plan and sustain the Kingston Land Trust's Kingston Rail Trail Connections project. The project will help connect existing trails throughout the greater Kingston region. Hinchey wrote the RTCA program manager in July requesting federal assistance. The Kingston program was selected from the most competitive field of requests ever received by the agency and was one of only a handful of new projects accepted in New York State.

"I am pleased to have helped secure federal assistance for this project, which will help knit the City of Kingston together with a network of trails along historic rail corridors," said Hinchey. "The Kingston Rail Trail Connections project is going to strengthen our growing trail system so that it can be enjoyed by local residents and visitors to our region. It will engage the local community and young people, create linkages between neighborhoods and commercial districts, and increase the traffic flow of customers towards local businesses, which can only have positive effects for our economy."

"The Kingston Land Trust is honored to have the support of the National Park Service for our 'Kingston Connections' project." said Rebecca Martin, Executive Director of the Kingston Land Trust. Gregg Swanzey, Kingston Land Trust Board Director and Chair of the Kingston Land Trust Rail Trail Committee added, "we are all excited in finding ways to restore connections along historic pathways in the city of Kingston to create a 'Midtown Hub' or rail trails and greenways."

The RTCA will provide the technical assistance necessary to improve existing rail trails by addressing overgrowth, drainage problems and other issues. It will also help the Kingston Land Trust negotiate right-of-way agreements with private landowners to connect the trails together and link them to neighborhoods and business districts. The RTCA will also help expand public engagement through a community planning workshop in early 2012 and by convening a Friends of Kingston Rail Trails group to undertake ongoing community and youth involvement with operation and maintenance of the trail system.

The project will help to further the goals of the National Park Service's America's Great Outdoors initiative, which supports community efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation, and to cultivate stewardship and appreciation of America's natural and recreational resources through innovative partnerships. Through the RTCA Program, the National Park Service helps communities and neighborhoods develop new trails and greenways, and protect and manage

open space and improve rivers. These projects are locally-led with RTCA staff supporting community based conservation and recreation leaders. This year, 52 projects in 13 states were selected to receive technical assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. In 2011, RTCA efforts helped over 175 communities leverage \$1.65 million in funds for targeted projects.