



Legislative Outreach Guide

This guide will provide you with information on reaching out to your local, state, and federal legislators to help gain and maintain their support for the East Coast Greenway.

Legislator Contact and Background Information

Contacting federal and state legislators whose districts are affected by the East Coast Greenway is critical for increasing the ECG's momentum. We need to provide legislators with information about the ECG that will convince them that supporting the trail is an important and simple thing they can do for their state. It is also important to note which legislators are in positions that can be useful to the ECG (heads of committees, etc).

www.congress.org

This website is a great source of information about your state and federal representatives. Plug in your zip code, and you'll receive a list of all your representatives. Click on any of them for contact information (at home and in DC), term, party affiliation, key votes, committees they are on, staff info, and more. *(The site also has a slew of other information including tips on contacting your rep, info about current and past bills, and more).*

www.vote-smart.org

In addition to contact and background info about local, state, and federal legislators, this site's most useful feature is a comprehensive voting record for each legislator. Look up a particular legislator and you can find out how they voted on every issue each year they have been in office. Additionally, you can learn about their issue positions and interest group ratings.

www.lcv.org

The League of Conservation Voters tracks voting records on environmental issues for members of Congress. Check out their "Scorecard" (www.lcv.org/scorecard) to view these records.

Who and What is Important?

It is important to pay particular attention to those legislators who are members of Congressional committees relevant to the ECG. As you look for background information on your legislators, you can check to see which committees they are a part of. These websites provide lists of House and Senate members by committee:

- http://clerk.house.gov/committee_info/index.html
- <http://www.senate.gov> – click on "Committees"

If there is a particular bill in Congress that has the potential to affect the ECG, it is important for the ECGA to participate in public comment periods as well as voice our opinions to our legislators. Wherever possible, we will provide alerts to you if your action is needed. A good website for billtracking is:

- <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Corresponding with your Representative

There are three ways to communicate with a legislator outside of a meeting: letters, phone calls & emails. When you contact them, be sure to tell them you are a constituent in their state and that you represent the East Coast Greenway Alliance. This will increase the chances of them paying attention to you because you can not only vote for or against them, but you also represent a larger group of constituents. (ECGA membership now totals about 10,000 – taking into account that many memberships are families and couples. Kitty Carter (kitty@greenway.org) can provide membership numbers for your state).

Note: Due to the Anthrax scare on Capitol Hill several years ago, congressional mail is now screened and may take weeks to reach a member. Using email, fax, or phone is recommended for time-sensitive issues.

Letters & Emails to Federal Representatives

When writing a letter or email to a rep in DC, use the following headings. Be sure to include your full contact information as well. If you are sending correspondence to your representative while they are in their state office, use the same salutations and titles, but use the address provided for their state office.

To a Senator:	To a Representative:
The Honorable Sen. (full name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	The Honorable Rep. (full name) United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515
Dear Senator:	Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as: Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman or Mr. Speaker:

Phone Calls to Federal Representatives

A quick way to get a phone number for your senators and representatives is to call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

Telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member, not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (S. ___/ H.R. ___)."

You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators' or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

Contacting State Representatives

The salutations and titles are the same, but use the state addresses provided when you look up their contact and background information.

Meeting with a Representative in Capitol Hill

Adapted from www.congress.org

Plan Your Visit Carefully:

Be clear about what it is you want to achieve; determine in advance which member or committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

Make an Appointment:

Contact the member's Appointment Secretary/Scheduler (can be found on www.congress.org). Explain your purpose and who you represent. It is easier for congressional staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area or interests represented by the member.

Be Prompt and Patient:

Due to the member's busy schedule, you need to be punctual, patient, and flexible about interruptions and rescheduling. If a meeting is interrupted, try to continue the meeting with staff.

Be Prepared:

Bring information and materials supporting your position. Members are required to take positions on many different issues. In some instances, a member may lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is therefore helpful to share with the member information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation.

Be Political:

Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency. If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. Where it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.

Be Responsive:

Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information, in the event the member expresses interest or asks questions. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials requested.

Ideas for "get your legislator on the trail" day events

Getting your legislator out on the trail is a great way to show them, in a memorable way, that the people of your community love and want more trails. It's important to make sure the legislator know that they will get more benefit than the support of just one constituent – invite the media and other groups to your event as well.

- Host a National Trails Day event and invite your legislator to attend
- Invite your legislator on a personalized tour of your trail – emphasize that you are other supporters will be there.
- Hold a trail grand opening, ground breaking, ECG designation or trail marker unveiling media event – legislators will be more likely to attend if they will get positive media attention.

- Know what role your legislator played in securing funding for the project

Providing Information about the East Coast Greenway

Whenever you meet with a legislator, it's important to be armed with good information.

- Have a set of information with you whenever you go to meetings, including:
 - An info sheet about the ECG
 - Brochure
 - Newsletter
 - State and National Map
 - State of the Trail Report
- Be sure to send a packet of information to each newly-elected legislator. Include a letter of introduction (see Appendix A for a sample).
- Always be prepared and know what you wish to talk about and ask them to do (see Appendix C for talking points)