



The “Ask” for Safe Routes to School

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New Transportation Authorization

Major challenges:

- SAFETEA-LU expired September 2009, working under extensions
- Highway trust fund is broke; gas tax static since 1993
- Construction costs growing
- Concerns about oil dependence, congestion, climate
- Impact of transportation costs on families



Potential opportunity to shift to a multi-modal transportation system:

- Administration focusing on livability and safety
- Bike/ped/transit voices being heard at listening sessions
- Sec. LaHood has blogged on bike commuting, SRTS, and Complete Streets





Current Status

House side:

- T&I Chairman Oberstar is avid cyclist, champion for SRTS
- Surface Transportation Authorization Act (STAA) draft passed subcommittee June 2009
- STAA included only policy, no funding levels
- Need to work with Ways & Means on financing
- Chairman Oberstar has been pushing to move forward

Senate side:

- Three different committees on the Senate have jurisdiction, which slows the process
- Senate EPW Committee holding hearings in March
- Chairman Boxer said there will be a Senate bill this year





Safe Routes to School Reauthorization Issues

Increase funding

- Grow from \$183 million in FY09 to \$600 million per year
- 3x as many applicants requesting 4x funds available now
- Just 6% of schools nationwide will receive a grant
- Would take \$17 billion to award just 1 grant to every K-8 school

Expand eligibility

1) Expand program focus from K-8 to K-12.

- 17.6% of high school students are obese; activity levels low
- Would help transition to life-long habits



2) Allow funding for safe routes to bus stops (up to 10% of infrastructure)

- Primary purpose is to increase safety in rural areas
- Could support lighting, signage, etc.





Safe Routes to School Reauthorization Issues

Improve project delivery and reduce overhead

- Reduce challenges and delays from “title 23” highway regulations
- Exempt non-infrastructure projects from these regulations
- Require FHWA and State DOTs to use existing practices and precedents that will speed implementation of infrastructure projects

Add research and evaluation

- Set aside 1.5 to 2.5% for research and evaluation
- Require FHWA to develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation plan





Key Legislation: S. 1156

S. 1156, Safe Routes to School Program Reauthorization Act

- Directly in line with our reauthorization asks
- Introduced May 2009 by bipartisan group: Sens. Harkin (D-IA), Burr (R-NC), Sanders (I-VT), Merkley (D-OR), and Collins (R-ME)
Now has 21 Senators currently supporting
- Many national education, health and transportation organizations support the bill

Ask for Senators:

- Please cosponsor S. 1156 to show support for Safe Routes to School
- For Senators already on board, thank them





Key Legislation: H.R. 4021 and STAA

H.R. 4021, the Safe Routes to High Schools Act

- Simply adds high schools to the current program
- Does not include any other policy or funding changes

Surface Transportation Authorization Act (STAA)

- Current House transportation authorization draft
- Includes many of our recommendations for SRTS on research and project delivery
- Does not include expansion to high schools or bus stops
- Chairman Oberstar has publicly expressed support for increased funding

House side summit ask

- Please cosponsor H.R. 4021 to show support for SRTS and expanding to including high schools
- Please also contact Reps. Oberstar and Mica to support the SRTS changes in STAA and increased funding





Responding to Criticism

The federal role in transportation should be about highways

- SRTS helps communities address real national problems with safety, air quality, traffic congestion, and fuel consumption
- SRTS is a small investment helping thousands of communities for the price of just a few miles of 1 highway in one state

The funding increase is too high

- The funding increase is necessary because of the great demand for these dollars across the country
- Funds invested in SRTS help save bus transportation and fuel costs and can reduce costly traffic deaths and physical inactivity



I don't see how this helps rural areas

- Small rural towns often lack sidewalks and are often bisected by highways
- Small towns in rural areas all across the country are already applying for and receiving SRTS
- Safe routes to bus stops will help rural areas even more





Tips for Your Visit and Afterwards

During your Congressional visit:

- Tailor your message to the Member's interest (health, cost savings, etc.)
- Share stories about SRTS in your community
- Don't forget to make the ask!



After your Congressional visit:

- Make sure to return your reporting forms to LAB so we can follow up with Members that are interested
- Feel free to contact me with additional details (margo@saferoutespartnership.org)
- Work with your team to send thank you notes
- Keep the connection going through a site visit





For More Information

- Questions or comments? Contact:
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