

May 14, 2009

The Honorable James L. Oberstar, Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2308

The Honorable John L. Mica, Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2308

The Honorable Pete DeFazio, Chairman
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
B-370A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2308

The Honorable Jimmy Duncan, Ranking Member
House Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
B-375 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2308

Dear Mr. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee begins work on a new surface transportation authorization, we are writing to express our strong support for increased support and better integration of bicycling and non-motorized transit opportunities into our nation's transportation policy. We believe that a surface transportation bill that embraces a fully multi-modal system, inclusive of non-motorized options, can address the challenges of improved mobility, healthy communities, economic vitality and enhanced quality of life.

There is growing national interest in expanding bicycle use. Last year, Congress affirmed its support for new bicycling opportunities by unanimously approving H. Con Res. 305, which stated congressional support for national target levels for increased bicycle use, improved intermodal travel with public transportation and expanded federal funding for non-motorized programs. To this end, we believe that the new surface transportation authorization bill provides the opportunity to reflect these priorities. Specifically, we support inclusion of a federal Complete Streets policy, expanded funding for bicycling and walking networks and facilities, a more balanced distribution of highway safety funds for pedestrians and bicycling, and expansion of the Safe Routes to School program.

A Complete Streets policy requires that roads and highways constructed with federal investment are built for all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians. While improvements in federal support for bicycle and pedestrian projects have been made since 1991 - increasing above one percent of total transportation funding in recent years - it is crucial that the balance of transportation funding is invested in projects that enable non-motorized transportation, and do not make these modes less safe, desirable or convenient. An effective, enforceable and measurable Complete Streets policy, applied to all transportation investment, would ensure that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are addressed in every project.

It will also be important to focus investment on making our transportation networks more seamless between roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and transit systems, and to link communities together. These networks should be accessible and safe for all users, connect pedestrians and bicyclists to retail, housing and employment centers, and enable more trips to be made by foot and bicycle. Most travel in the U.S. is local, with forty percent of all trips just two miles or less. Increased investment and integration of these networks can increase the amount of these trips that are by non-motorized means.

We also support the distribution of federal highway safety funds in proportion with fatalities. Currently bicyclists and pedestrians account nationally for 13 percent of the fatalities on our roadways, but less than one percent of safety funding is spent on roadway safety improvements dedicated to these modes. Improving dangerous intersections, roads and neighborhoods could reduce concerns or impediments to increased bicycling and walking in all communities, and will make bicycling and walking safer and more viable transportation options.

Finally, we request a significant funding increase for the Safe Routes to School program. This will allow more schools and communities to improve safety for children walking and bicycling to school. Only 15% of children currently walk or bicycle to school today, down from nearly 50% in 1969—which reduces the benefits to children’s health and physical activity levels, traffic congestion, and air quality around schools. Concurrent with the funding increase, we request provisions that will strengthen the program by expanding eligibility to include high schools and Safe Routes to Bus Stops, reduce program overhead and implementation delays, and require grantees conduct research and uniform performance evaluations.

As a society, we are facing serious challenges relating to economic stagnation, climate change and oil-dependence. Enhancing bicycling can contribute to solving these challenges, while also promoting healthy activity and livable communities. To this end, we support the inclusion of a Complete Streets policy, increased investment to create bicycling and walking networks, a fair distribution of safety funds, and expansion of the Safe Routes to School program in the next transportation bill.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to ensure that we create a sound, balanced transportation system that provides transportation choices.

Sincerely,