

May 22, 2009

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

As your Committee drafts the next surface transportation bill, we know you are facing many challenges as you strive to support a transportation system designed for the 21st century. As members of the Congressional Bike Caucus, a bi-partisan caucus with 227 members, we recognize this legislation's potential to dramatically improve the way we live, work, and play. We are writing to express our support for establishing a truly multi-modal national transportation policy that better integrates bicycling and walking into our nation's transportation system.

Prioritizing biking and walking in our transportation system provides us with new and innovative ways to address a number of issues facing our nation. Biking and walking programs offer cost-effective solutions to global warming, as 28 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector,¹ they can help mitigate the public health crisis of obesity in America, and they provide American families with inexpensive transportation options. These alternatives are important, as an average family pays 20 percent of its income on transportation costs.²

Bicycling and pedestrian projects help improve our health, the environment and our pocketbooks, but most importantly they promote the livability of our communities. They are also very popular programs: a recent survey conducted by the Department of Transportation found that 71% of Americans say they want to bike more.³

¹ US EPA2009 U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/downloads09/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

² "Platform for the National Transportation Program Authorization," Transportation For America

http://t4america.org/docs/T4_platform.pdf (Accessed May 4, 2009)

³ "National Survey on Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior," NHTSA, 2008.

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Articles/Associated%20Files/810972.pdf> (Accessed May 4, 2009)

Transportation is not just about how we get from point to point, but how those points are connected. Biking and walking increase the interactions we have with our neighbors and helps neighborhoods thrive economically while encouraging healthier lifestyles.

Bicycling and walking currently accounts for 10 percent of all trips made by Americans⁴ yet our current federal investment is closer to 2 percent of transportation funds. Investing in these modes of transportation creates jobs, saves taxpayers money and helps raise our overall quality of life.

Therefore, we respectfully request your support for the following:

(1) Reauthorize the Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Program at a substantially higher level to reflect the extraordinary demand for the SAFETEA-LU SRTS Program. In 1969, over 50% of children in the United States got to school by walking or bicycling, but in 2001, only 15 percent of students were walking or biking to school.⁵ Over a third of children who live within a mile of their school walk, yet that mile, full of highways and speeding cars, can be far from secure. The Safe Routes to Schools Program funds infrastructure improvements and education programs to ensure children have safe routes and are comfortable traveling those routes.

(2) Include a Complete Streets policy requirement to ensure that roads built using federal transportation dollars are available for all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians. We have made significant advances in the amount of funding spent on bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs since 1991, reaching two percent of transportation funding in recent years. Roads using federal dollars should be safe for all users. A Complete Streets policy would ensure that the needs of all citizens are addressed in every federal transportation project.

(3) Create a new Active Transportation Investment Fund to support concentrated investment in completing active transportation systems in cities and towns. Building on the success of the non-motorized pilot program in SAFETEA-LU (sec. 1807), the fund should give large grants and flexible decision-making opportunities to local governments with the expectation that they will achieve measurable mode shift.

⁴ Pucher, John and John L. Renne, Socioeconomics of Urban Travel: Evidence from the 2001 NHTS, *Transportation Quarterly*, 2003.

⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highways Administration, National Household Travel Survey, <http://nhts.ornl.gov/briefs/Travel%20To%20School.pdf>

Communities that invest in active transportation infrastructure over time experience impressive increases in bicycling and walking rates, and such investments are in strong demand because they enhance the livability of communities. Since 1993, Portland, Oregon, has invested \$54 million—the equivalent of building one mile of freeway—to build 240 miles of bike lanes. As a result of this modest investment in active transportation, bicycling now accounts for 4 percent of the transportation mode split for all trips and 16 percent of Portlanders use bicycles as either their primary or secondary means of transportation to get to work. Furthermore, this investment has spawned 40 bike shops and more than 150 bicycle-related businesses that provide thousands of green-collar jobs with an economic impact of more than \$65 million in 2005.

Nearly half of the trips taken in America are within a twenty-minute bicycle ride, and a quarter of trips are within a twenty-minute walk. These trips are the easiest to shift to biking and walking. A strategic federal investment is needed to allow communities to create interconnected systems that make it convenient and safe to travel on foot or by bicycle to destinations on a routine basis. The success of SAFETEA-LU suggests that local involvement in these strategic investments leads to projects that increase the use of active transportation methods.

(4) Require data collection of comparable frequency and scope for all modes of transportation. Direct the Secretary to address the need for bicycle and pedestrian data by funding a national data collection program. This program would: (1) establish a consistent national bicycle and pedestrian count and survey methodology to assess levels, trends and safety of bicycling and walking; (2) establish a national database of bicycle and pedestrian information generated by these consistent methods and practices; (3) provide funding to communities to conduct data collection; and (4) analyze the collected data to inform planning and policy.

This data collection program will enable accurate predictions of the contribution of bicycling and walking to the nation's transportation system.

We appreciate your past support for these programs and your leadership in promoting biking and walking. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the legislation promotes a sound, balanced transportation system that provides the transportation choices every American needs and that puts us on a path towards solving the problems we face as a nation.

Sincerely,

