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# ACTION STEPS FOR CHAMPIONS TO BOOST YOUR STATE'S SCORE – NEW OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW



## Making Strides: State Report Cards on Walking, Bicycling, and Active Kids and Communities

The 2022 full report, [Making Strides: State Report Cards on Walking, Bicycling, and Active Kids and Communities](#), provides a detailed explanation of how the states were graded; an overview of the research that supports walking, bicycling, and physical activity as ways to improve health; a discussion of the rationale for state-level report cards; and reflections on support for physical activity in different regions and our country as a whole.

## Background

In November 2021, Congress passed a new surface transportation bill, the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021](#), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). This law created new programs, increased funding for, and made significant policy changes to programs that fund walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School. While some of these programs are implemented at the federal level, most of the programs and funds are implemented by state departments of transportation. As a result, states have tremendous influence over how funds get invested. The policies, practices, and personnel states put in place

shape whether these federal resources are invested in ways that support walking, bicycling, rolling, and active kids and communities.

Every two years, Safe Routes Partnership takes inventory of how states are doing influencing the flow of federal transportation funds to support walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School as part of the Making Strides: State Report Cards on Walking, Bicycling, and Active Kids and Communities. The 2022 Making Strides state report cards evaluate each state on 27 indicators spanning four core topic areas that focus on key areas for state action to promote and support physical activity. High-scoring and lower-scoring states alike require sustained commitment from state agencies and policymakers to support physical activity – and maintain and raise report card scores.

This resource provides recommendations for how champions and stakeholders who care about their state's support for active transportation and physical activity, can emphasize new opportunities within the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to influence decision-makers in their state to strengthen state policies and practices for improving walking and rolling and raise their state report card scores.

## Glossary of Acronyms

- BIL: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- DOT: Department of Transportation
- HSIP: Highway Safety Improvement Program
- MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization
- SRTS: Safe Routes to School
- TAP: Transportation Alternatives Program
- VRU: Vulnerable Road User

## How Report Card Topic Areas Align with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Opportunities

Three of the core topic areas in the report card are directly affected by transportation funding and policies in the BIL and provide opportunities for states to consider the impacts on walking, rolling, and Safe Routes to School: 1) Complete Streets and Active Transportation Policy and Planning; 2) Federal and State Active Transportation Funding; and 3) Safe Routes to School Funding and Supportive Practices. The BIL provides new opportunities for states to boost their report card scores in each of these three topic areas. The following table organizes the BIL opportunities according to core topic areas. The table offers additional sources for further exploration, new guidance developed for each program, and examples of states that have demonstrated creative and effective use of federal funding to advance walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School. The Safe Routes Partnership website also provides additional publications to explain the BIL and ways to engage state and community partners in this effort.

## How to Use the Action Steps Table

The following table organizes information by report card subtopics, broken down further by indicators found in the report card. Each indicator has a unique action step or multiple that apply to other nearby indicators. These action steps are geared toward champions for building relationships and working with their state departments of transportation (DOT) to effectuate these improvements.



The State Report Cards do not evaluate Metropolitan Planning Organizations on their Complete Streets Policies, however, active transportation champions and coalitions invested in state policies may be interested in advancing Complete Streets at a regional level too.

[Influencing Complete Streets Policies at the MPO level](#)

## Opportunities and Action Steps to Raise Report Card Scores

### Core topic area: Complete Streets and Active Transportation Policy and Planning

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Complete Streets Policies	Adopted state Complete Streets policy(ies)	The BIL requires states (and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)) to use 2.5 percent of their State Planning and Research funds for Complete Streets activities that will increase safe and accessible transportation options. These planning funds can be used for developing Complete Streets policies and standards, Complete Streets prioritization plans, other active transportation plans, plans to increase transit, and plans to identify alternatives to increasing highway capacity.	Examine current Complete Streets policies and opportunities to strengthen them by referencing examples from other states. (Hint: use your state's report card to assess whether your state has a strong Complete Streets policy or if there is room for improvement!)	<a href="#">Elements of Effective Complete Streets Policies (National Complete Streets Coalition)</a>  <a href="#">Complete Streets Policy Model Language</a>  <a href="#">Complete Streets Toolkit</a>  <a href="#">Active Living Resource Portal and Support Request through American Heart Association</a>  <a href="#">Fact Sheet on Influencing Complete Streets Policies at the MPO level</a>
	Has strong state Complete Streets policy			
Active Transportation Goals and Planning	Adopted goals to increase walking and bicycling mode share	<p>Changes to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) in the BIL now require states to complete a vulnerable road user (VRU) safety assessment. This assessment looks at the safety performance of the state with respect to all road users outside of vehicles.</p> <p>The guidance from the Federal Highway Administration encourages states to incorporate local safety plans into the statewide VRU Safety Assessment (required by November 2023), which offers local communities an opportunity to elevate their Safe Routes to School plans into this statewide plan.</p>	<p>Encourage submitting locally-adopted active transportation safety plans to state DOT for inclusion in state VRU safety assessment.</p> <p>Urge the state DOT to prioritize projects to increase walking and bicycling mode share and improve safety and connectivity for people walking and bicycling, and de-prioritize autocentric projects through letters, public testimony, meetings with agency leadership, and public campaigns.</p> <p>Ask state DOTs to develop or update statewide bicycle/pedestrian or active transportation plans, and Safe Routes to School plans.</p>	<a href="#">Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment Guidance from Federal Highway Administration (see pg. 17)</a>
	Adopted a state pedestrian, bicycle, or active transportation plan	<p>Participate in the planning process and elevate community needs.</p>		

State departments of transportation should maximize their use of Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding for non-motorized and active transportation and not transfer those resources outside of TAP for other purposes. Active transportation projects are not limited to using TAP for funding. In addition to TAP, other federal programs also include active transportation projects among their eligibility criteria.

Core topic area: Federal Active Transportation Funding

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Use of Federal Funding for Active Transportation	Retained TAP funding without transfers	The BIL requires states (and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)) to use 2.5 percent of their State Planning and Research funds for Complete Streets activities that will increase safe and accessible transportation options. These planning funds can be used for developing Complete Streets policies and standards, Complete Streets prioritization plans, other active transportation plans, plans to increase transit, and plans to identify alternatives to increasing highway capacity.	Locate the TAP funding information on the state DOT website and subscribe to announcements. Boost information about TAP funds and share widely to eligible entities (local governments, school districts, tribal communities, nonprofits, transportation agencies, etc.) to ensure that they know funds are available and how/when to apply.	<a href="#">State-by-state fact sheets with information on TAP funding available and competition dates</a>
	Awarded TAP projects		Check if your state is making progress on getting awarded TAP project funding out the door. If not, connect with the TAP coordinator at the state DOT to inquire.	<a href="#">Quarterly TAP Tracking Chart</a>
	Obligated state-controlled TAP funds			
	Provides special consideration for high-need communities in TAP awards	The BIL requires states to define and prioritize high need communities. States and MPOs are encouraged to incorporate demographic information into their TAP applications.	Encourage state agencies to develop or strengthen criteria for prioritizing high-need communities and provide feedback on this process. This may be happening within existing bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees or other planning committees. Provide support or information to representatives on those committees to engage in that process.  Research health improvement plans and community health needs assessments developed for your community. Bring that data to conversations with state agencies about prioritization criteria.	<a href="#">Fact sheet on defining and prioritizing high-need communities with examples from states across the country</a>  <a href="#">Research article "Examining Practices that Promote Access to Safe Routes to School Programs in Vulnerable Communities"</a>
	Provides matching funds for high-need communities	The BIL provides states with flexibility related to the local match requirement. Match may now be calculated at the program level (not individual projects), allowing states to structure match requirements to enable high-need communities to provide a lower match percentage or no match at all.	Encourage DOTs to use flexibilities in BIL to lower match requirement for TAP funding. Suggest using Highway Safety Improvement Program funds, toll credits, state funds, or to average the match at the program level rather than requiring each project to fulfill the full 20 percent match.  If your state has updated its match requirements to lower the match from high-need communities, identify projects from high-need communities that were not submitted to funding competitions previously due to having no local match resources.  Identify new projects from high-need communities that can now compete with local match requirement flexibility.	<a href="#">States may use state funds or toll credits as the match (see Fig. 3 on pg. 75)</a>  <a href="#">Guidance on toll credits</a>

Core topic area: Federal Active Transportation Funding (continued)

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Use of Federal Funding for Active Transportation	Provides support to TAP applicants	The BIL allows states to use up to five percent of technical assistance funds to staff TAP at the DOT, provide technical assistance to potential applicants, and to expedite project delivery. This is a new provision.	<p>Encourage potential TAP applicants such as cities and school districts to request technical assistance support from state DOT, citing new provision in BIL.</p> <p>Share ideas for helpful technical assistance that DOT could provide with DOT: one-on-one application support, webinars with time for questions and answers, support with cost estimation, design and planning assistance, and by providing names of vetted consultants.</p> <p>Encourage state to fully staff TAP and Safe Routes to School programs.</p>	<p>Information on the amount of funding available to your state to provide technical assistance, your state TAP website, and (if known) TAP manager's contact information can be located on these <a href="#">state-by-state fact sheets</a></p> <p>Ideas for how states provide support to TAP applicants: hold workshops with department of transportation staff and local communities; host office hours for communities to ask questions; provide design assistance; reimburse applicants for cost estimates and plan development</p>
	Sets aside other federal (non-TAP) funding for active transportation	The BIL re-affirmed eligibility for funding walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School broadly throughout surface transportation funding programs. BIL re-affirmed eligibility for Safe Routes to School infrastructure within TAP and again allows up to 10 percent of a state's Highway Safety Improvement Program funding for specified safety projects, which include Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure-related activities and Safe Routes to School coordinators.	<p>Ask state DOT about non-TAP federal funding sources for active transportation projects and programs and learn how they use their discretion to allocate those funds toward active transportation or non-active transportation purposes.</p> <p>Encourage state to use Highway Safety Improvement Program funds as match for TAP and for Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure.</p>	<p><a href="#">Examples of states using federal non-TAP funding for active transportation (see p. 13-14)</a></p> <p><a href="#">At-a-glance reference guide for bicycle and pedestrian eligibilities within the suite of federal funding programs</a></p>

**Core topic area: Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Funding and Supportive Practices**

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Safe Routes to School Funding	Provides special consideration for Safe Routes to School projects using TAP funds	The BIL codified Safe Routes to School (SRTS) in current law and expanded eligibility for the program to include high schools. The BIL re-affirmed Safe Routes to School eligibility within TAP and other funding programs and expanded its eligibility within HSIP. Additionally, overall funding for TAP increased by over 60 percent, which provides an opportunity to set aside funds for SRTS or prioritize SRTS within the larger pot of available funds.	<p>Encourage state DOT and/or elected decisionmakers to prioritize Safe Routes to School within TAP funding – either by setting aside funds or prioritizing Safe Routes to School projects within TAP competition.</p> <p>If your state already does this, ask TAP manager and/or statewide Safe Routes to School coordinator if a larger amount will be set aside for SRTS due to increases to TAP funding.</p> <p>Encourage local communities to submit Safe Routes to School projects to demonstrate interest in the program to state decisionmakers.</p>	<p><a href="#">States Prioritizing Safe Routes to School (see p. 78-79)</a></p>
	Dedicates state or other funding for Safe Routes to School	Safe Routes to School is broadly eligible for surface transportation funding programs, not only the Transportation Alternatives Program. The BIL re-affirmed this eligibility and carved out new eligibilities for Safe Routes to School within the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). States may use HSIP money for Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects and may use up to ten percent of HSIP funds for Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure, including state or local coordinators.	Encourage state DOT to use non-TAP funds, especially Highway Safety Improvement Program funds, to invest in Safe Routes to School.	<p><a href="#">States funding Safe Routes to School with state funds and/or federal non-TAP funds (see Appendix B in full report for details)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Examples of states using Highway Safety Improvement Program funds for Safe Routes to School (see p. 13-14)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Investing in Health, Safety, and Mobility: A Report on State Funding for Walking, Bicycling, and Safe Routes to School</a></p>
	Funds SRTS non-infrastructure projects	The BIL re-affirmed eligibility for Safe Routes to School projects and non-infrastructure programs within TAP and re-allows a state to use up to 10 percent of its HSIP funding for specified safety projects. The 10 percent can be applied to funding Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure-related activities and hiring Safe Routes to School coordinator positions.	<p>Request state DOT to use TAP funds or HSIP funds to invest in the non-infrastructure components and staffing up for Safe Routes to School. Convey that with a sixty percent increase to TAP funds and increases across the surface transportation program, states have significantly more funds to invest in communities, and Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure is a supportive way to do that.</p> <p>Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure can be an on-ramp for high-need communities to learn the ropes of federal transportation funding without having to manage large capital projects. Encourage high-need communities to start with Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure applications if they feel daunted by the prospect of managing a federal grant.</p>	<p><a href="#">States funding Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure projects</a></p>

**Core topic area: Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Funding and Supportive Practices (continued)**

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Safe Routes to School Funding	Provides Safe Routes to School planning grants or mini-grants	The BIL allows planning as a standalone eligible activity within the Transportation Alternatives Program.	Request DOTs to use TAP funds to invest in more planning grants for SRTS to help increase readiness for future construction grant applications.	<a href="#">Example of state with strong planning and mini grant programs: Michigan</a>
Safe Routes to School Supportive Practices	Staffs state Safe Routes to School program with state employees or consultants	The BIL provides states with the flexibility to use up to five percent of TAP funds to staff the SRTS program, including a Safe Routes to School coordinator, provide technical assistance and support project delivery. Additionally, it affirms that Safe Route to School coordinators are an eligible use of Highway Safety Improvement Program funds.	Encourage state DOT decisionmakers or state policymakers to invest in a full-time, statewide Safe Routes to School coordinator housed within the DOT, a partner agency, a nonprofit organization, or a private sector company. Make the case for this coordinator to operate from your own organization if appropriate.	<a href="#">Information on role of Safe Routes to School coordinators (this is focused locally but can be applied at the state level as well. See p. 28, and see appendix for sample Safe Routes to School coordinator job descriptions)</a>
	Provides a resource center or technical assistance to Safe Routes to School initiatives	States may fund full-time Safe Routes to School coordinators and the associated technical assistance and resource development using the five percent of TAP funds for technical assistance or up to ten percent of Highway Safety Improvement Program funds.	Recommend the state DOT to design a role for a statewide SRTS coordinator with support for them to develop and curate a Safe Routes to School resource center.  Request statewide or regional Safe Routes to School coordinators for support for applying to upcoming TAP applications.  Recommend the statewide coordinator to partner with your organization or other partners to provide community resources.	<a href="#">Florida Safe Routes to School Resource Center</a>
	Adopted a state SRTS plan or incorporated SRTS into a state active transportation plan	An opportunity to elevate local Safe Routes to School plans emerges from the new Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment that is required of states by November 2023. The guidance from the Federal Highway Administration encourages states to incorporate local safety plans into the statewide VRU Safety Assessment, which offers local communities an opportunity to elevate their Safe Routes to School plans into this statewide plan.	Recommend the state DOT to develop statewide Safe Routes to School plans or incorporate a Safe Routes to School plan into state active transportation plans.	<a href="#">Alaska Statewide Active Transportation Plan includes Safe Routes to School in one of their Performance Measures Goal Areas (PM 5.1)</a>
	Supports equitable access to Safe Routes to School programming	States may fund full-time Safe Routes to School coordinators and the associated technical assistance and resource development using the five percent of TAP funds for technical assistance or up to ten percent of HSIP funds.	Recommend resources the state DOT should provide for SRTS in non-white communities, for people with disabilities, and multigenerational households as examples of equitable access. Partner with state DOT to develop those resources.	<a href="#">Georgia Safe Routes to School Materials in Spanish</a>  <a href="#">Minnesota's Walk! Bike! Fun! Program</a> includes an adaptive toolkit for students using the adaptive bicycles fleet



## Conclusion

Getting familiar with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and how to use the State Report Card to engage with transportation officials and decisionmakers can help conversations move toward action. There are plenty of opportunities to raise scores and improve conditions in your state overall, and with the BIL there are even more ways than before. Assess your state's capacity to carry out the requirements of the BIL to maximize gains for walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School for high-need communities and the state at-large. Draw upon strong state examples provided in this resource, new opportunities created by the BIL, and your knowledge of your state's assets to partner with your state DOT to make the most of this opportunity for improving walking, bicycling, and active kids and communities.

With this primer in hand, making asks and seeking out support can be simpler. Support is available closer than you think. Connect with coalitions in your state or local community and tap into the resources of national organizations to keep the momentum going. [How to Use Your State's Report Card on Walking, Biking, and Physical Activity](#) has more ideas on activities and strategies to make change.

## References

1. Safe Routes Partnership, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Background and Resources, (n.d.). <https://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/policy-change/federal/BIL-background-resources>
2. Safe Routes Partnership, Changes to Transportation Alternatives in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, (2021). [https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/changes\\_to\\_tap\\_in\\_bil\\_v2.pdf](https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/changes_to_tap_in_bil_v2.pdf)