

BOOST YOUR STATE'S SCORE – ACTION STEPS FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION USING NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN FEDERAL LAW



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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.¹

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 state departments of transportation (DOTs) can respond to new opportunities within the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School – and maintain and raise 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 federal law and funding 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 scores in each of these three 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, including other resources in this series, to explain the BIL and ways to raise report card scores and engage state and community partners in this effort.

How to Use the Actions 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 ones that apply to other nearby indicators. These action steps are geared toward personnel of state DOT, including but not limited to those who manage Transportation Alternatives Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, Safe Routes to School, and planning department staff.



Opportunities and Action Steps to Raise Report Card Scores and Improve Walking, Bicycling, and Safe Routes to School in Your State

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.	<p>Convene a workgroup to discuss opportunities to strengthen Complete Streets policies drawing upon the expertise of agency staff, local governments, and active transportation stakeholders</p> <p>Use the 2.5 percent of State Planning and Research funds to develop or improve existing Complete Streets policies to address barriers to constructing walking and biking infrastructure, increase program allocations for active transportation, develop sustainable funding sources, and expand transit programs.</p> <p>If a strong Complete Streets policy is in place, develop a Complete Streets prioritization plan and establish a clear, actionable pathway for Complete Streets projects to be included in State Transportation Improvement Plans.</p>	<p>Elements of Effective Complete Streets Policies (National Complete Streets Coalition)</p> <p>Complete Streets Policy Model Language</p> <p>Complete Streets Policy Development</p> <p>Massachusetts DOT Complete Streets Prioritization Planning Tools and Examples (Click “Program Forms and Tools” then “Complete Streets Prioritization”)</p>
	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>Prioritize projects to increase walking and bicycling mode share and improve safety and connectivity for people walking and bicycling, and de-prioritize autocentric projects.</p> <p>Develop process for incorporating locally-adopted active transportation plans into statewide VRU safety assessment.</p> <p>Create more transparency in process for selecting safety projects and inform stakeholders on how the VRU safety assessment is applied.</p> <p>Develop and update statewide bicycle/pedestrian or active transportation plans, and Safe Routes to School plans and include specific projects.</p> <p>Develop clear, actionable process for incorporating projects and priorities in active transportation plans into State Transportation Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment Guidance from Federal Highway Administration (see pg. 17)</p> <p>Developing an Effective Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) Program</p>
	Adopted a state pedestrian, bicycle, or active transportation plan			

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. The Federal Highway Administration compiles a table of [bicycle and pedestrian federal funding opportunities](#).

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 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is the major source of federal funding for walking, bicycling, Safe Routes to School, and trails. The BIL nearly doubled funding for TAP, from \$850 million annually for fiscal years 2018 through 2020 to an average amount of \$1.44 billion from 2022 through 2026. The BIL created new requirements to deter states from transferring TAP funds. Before states may transfer funds to other uses, they must demonstrate that they have run TAP competitions that resulted in inadequate project proposals or no community interest in the available funding.	Make TAP funding information and personnel contacts on the state DOT website easy to locate. Boost information about TAP funds and share widely to eligible entities (local governments, school districts, tribal communities, nonprofits, transportation agencies, state extension services etc.) to ensure that they know funds are available and how/when to apply.	Transportation Alternatives funding tables from Federal Highway Administration (see Supplementary Tables 2 and 3)
	Awarded TAP projects		While obligation can get delayed due to lack of progress at the local level, state DOTs can get creative with what is within their power to expedite project delivery (and along with that obligation rates). Utilize the new provision in BIL allowing five percent of TAP funds to be used to improve access to the program and expediting project delivery.	Quarterly TAP Tracking Chart
	Obligated state-controlled TAP funds		Check your state's obligation rate. Connect with local governments or your state's municipal league to hear about barriers local governments are having implementing TAP projects to identify creative solutions to expedite project delivery	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.
	Provides special consideration for high-need communities in TAP awards	The BIL requires states to define and prioritize high need communities in TAP project selection and implementation. ²	Develop a definition for "high need" communities for your state and decide how you will prioritize high need communities in TAP project selection. Ideas include setting aside funds, adding points to scoring rubrics, providing matching funds for high-need communities. Be sure to advertise these changes on your TAP website and work with partners to conduct outreach to encourage applications from high need communities. Incorporate ideas from active transportation stakeholders, such as bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees or other planning committees. Invite community members to engage in this process.	Fact sheet on defining and prioritizing high-need communities with examples from states across the country
	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.	Use flexibilities in BIL to lower match requirement for TAP funding. Options include 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. Convey the program updates to potential applicants, especially those in small, rural, and lower-income communities. Partner with active transportation stakeholders, state extension agents, your state's municipal league to convey updated program resource information to applicants.	States may use state funds or toll credits as the match (see Fig. 3 on pg. 75) Guidance on toll credits

Core topic area: Federal Active Transportation Funding (continued)

SUBTOPIC:	INDICATOR:	BIL OPPORTUNITY:	ACTION STEPS:	HELPFUL RESOURCES:
<p>Use of Federal Funding for Active Transportation</p>	<p>Provides support to TAP applicants</p>	<p>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>	<p>Solicit feedback regarding the TAP program application and process from active transportation stakeholders, local governments, your state’s municipal league, and other eligible entities, like school districts, and make improvements based on the feedback.</p> <p>Convene potential applicants for information sessions about the program and offer time for questions and answers.</p> <p>Ensure your application timelines are advertised well in-advance, share TAP application guidance and scoring rubrics, and offer consultations to potential applicants.</p> <p>Encourage potential TAP applicants such as cities and school districts to request technical assistance support.</p> <p>Provide support for historically complicated aspects of TAP applications, like cost estimation. Share average costs, historical project costs, names of vetted consultants, time for district staff to complete cost estimations, or use technical assistance funds to pay for cost estimation for applicants.</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>
	<p>Sets aside other federal (non-TAP) funding for active transportation</p>	<p>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>	<p>Transportation Alternatives Program and Highway Safety Improvement Program staff should connect to identify how local entities can apply for TAP projects that are eligible for Highway Safety Improvement Program as match.</p> <p>Safe Routes to School Program and Highway Safety Improvement Program staff should connect to discuss opportunities for using HSIP funds to support. Consider opportunities to use Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality and Surface Transportation Block Grant funds to invest in walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School projects. Safe Routes to School</p>	<p>Examples of states using federal non-TAP funding for active transportation (see p. 13-14)</p> <p>At-a-glance reference guide for bicycle and pedestrian eligibilities within the suite of federal funding programs</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>Establish or update scoring criteria that prioritizes TAP applications for SRTS projects.</p> <p>Set aside TAP funds for Safe Routes to School. For a ballpark of a baseline amount, look at how much your state received specifically for Safe Routes to School when each state had a dedicated program.</p> <p>Spend down any remaining legacy Safe Routes to School funds – these projects are 100 percent federally funded (no local match required) for Safe Routes to School infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Promote opportunity for Safe Routes to School infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects to eligible applicants to TAP.</p>	<p>States Prioritizing Safe Routes to School (see p. 78-79)</p> <p>Historical funding amounts for Safe Routes to School under SAFETEA-LU</p> <p>Chart of states with legacy Safe Routes to School funds remaining</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.	Consider opportunities to use Highway Safety Improvement Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, and Surface Transportation Block Grant funds to invest in walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School projects.	<p>States funding Safe Routes to School with state funds and/or federal non-TAP funds (see Appendix B in full report for details)</p> <p>Examples of states using Highway Safety Improvement Program funds for Safe Routes to School (see p. 13-14)</p> <p>Investing in Health, Safety, and Mobility: A Report on State Funding for Walking, Bicycling, and Safe Routes to School</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>Use TAP funds or HSIP funds to invest in the non-infrastructure components and staffing up for Safe Routes to School. 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>	States funding Safe Routes to School non-infrastructure projects

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.	Use TAP funds to invest in planning grants for SRTS to help increase readiness for future construction grant applications. Work with community partners to develop grant application selection criteria and process for awarding grants.	Example of state with strong planning and mini grant programs: Michigan
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.	Budget for a full-time, statewide Safe Routes to School coordinator housed within the DOT, a partner agency, a nonprofit organization, or a private sector company. If your state already staffs Safe Routes to School, consider expanding the team to broaden impact across your state.	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)
	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.	Design a role for a statewide SRTS coordinator with support for them to develop and curate a Safe Routes to School resource center. Make statewide or regional Safe Routes to School coordinators or consultants available to provide support to TAP applicants. Partner with community organizations, academic institutions, and health departments to develop the resource center	Florida Safe Routes to School Resource Center
	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.	Develop statewide Safe Routes to School plans or incorporate a Safe Routes to School plan into state active transportation plans.	Alaska Statewide Active Transportation Plan includes Safe Routes to School in one of their Performance Measures Goal Areas (PM 5.1)
	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.	Provide support for a Safe Routes to School coordinator to be more responsive to communities with language, cultural, and disability needs. Supplement staffing with consultants and community partnerships who are equipped to address equity needs. Provide SRTS supportive resources and funding opportunities to racially diverse communities, for people with disabilities, and multigenerational households as examples of equitable access. Partner with community organizations, academic institutions, and health departments develop those resources.	Georgia Safe Routes to School Materials in Spanish Minnesota's Walk! Bike! Fun! Program 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 is essential for all state DOT personnel with power and influence over money and processes for investing more in walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School. There are plenty of opportunities to raise scores and improve conditions for walking and bicycling in your state overall, and with the BIL there are even more ways to address gaps and to raise scores than before. What this comes down to is assessing your agency'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. Identify barriers in the existing process for awarding TAP funding, deficiencies in the application, and gaps in personnel that are critical for advancing complete streets policies, a successful TAP program, and a robust Safe Routes to School program. Assess how your agency communicates to the public and TAP applicants about funding opportunities and where your agency can partner with other organizations and use consultants. Link up with other states demonstrating strong practices in your core topic areas and indicators of interest. Reach out to the Safe Routes Partnership with questions. Make the most of new opportunities in federal law to boost your state's support for walking, bicycling, and active kids and communities.

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