STATEMENT OF
DEBORAH A. HUBSMITH
DIRECTOR, SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
415-454-7430
On the Report of the
NATIONAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
POLICY AND REVENUE STUDY COMMISSION
For the
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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On behalf of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the "Transportation for Tomorrow" report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission. We recognize that you are wrestling with many issues including the fact that the Highway Trust Fund will soon exceed available resources.

There are several items within the Report that I agree with, such as:

- We need a new national vision and a new authorization for the next transportation bill;
- Performance based outcomes will be important for achieving a new national vision for transportation in America, provided that fair and complete measures can be developed;
- Metropolitan mobility issues are of critical national interest and will only grow more important as the population and economic clout of urbanized areas continues to increase;
- Increasing the speed of project delivery without sacrificing necessary environmental protections is critical for decreasing project costs and improving transportation systems;
- We will need to transition away from fossil fuels; and
- America needs new sources of revenue for transportation to ensure the ability to maintain and expand the United States' surface transportation system.

While the Report aims to achieve a new transportation vision for America, it unfortunately omits walking and bicycling as modes of transportation at a time when one-third of Americans do not drive. The Report also does not evaluate or note the considerable impacts of the surface transportation system's built environment on public health and medical expenditures through effects on obesity, physical inactivity, and injury. These are major flaws with the Report that should not be overlooked in its analysis by Congress.

Walking and Bicycling Are Core Transportation Modes

The 2001 National Household Travel Survey reveals that at least 9.5 percent of all trips in the U.S. are already being made by walking or bicycling, and 41 percent of all trips are two miles or less in length (the perfect length for walking and bicycling). However, neither the analysis nor recommendations in the Report make mention of walking and bicycling as methods to help solve our U.S. surface transportation challenges. The analysis only focuses on four modes of travel: highway, transit, freight rail, and passenger rail. This is a major oversight and a sincere disappointment.

It is not in the best interest for America to omit walking and bicycling from our future plans and transportation vision as these modes can help lead toward important performance based outcomes such as: reducing our carbon footprint, decreasing dependence on foreign oil and fossil fuels, and improving obesity, physical inactivity and public health concerns. I've heard some say that walking and bicycling may be important forms of transportation, but that they do not have a national impact or scope. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Transportation Can Be A Positive or Negative Influence on Health

Today in America 67 percent of adults are overweight or obese and nearly 1/3 of all children are overweight or obese.[1] In addition, childhood obesity has increased nearly five-fold for children aged 6-11 over the past 40 years, and doctors state that this current generation might be the first in more than 200 years to live shorter life spans than their parents. Transportation policies are contributing to the obesity epidemic. A major study showed people living in auto-oriented suburbs drive more, walk less, and are more obese than people living in walkable communities. For each hour of driving per day, obesity increases 6 percent, but walking for transportation reduces the risk of obesity.[2]

Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between the built environment and public health. Doctors and medical institutions have identified that a built environment that is hostile to walking and bicycling is an important contributing factor leading to sedentary lifestyles and increases in obesity. A panel from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that active transportation and overall physical activity is higher in communities designed to support walking and bicycling.[3] Some studies indicate that built environments can contribute to 30 to 60 minutes more physical activity per week.[4]

Transportation Impacts the Nation's Fiscal Health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that obesity cost America $117 billion in the year 2000. Physical inactivity results in $76 billion in direct medical costs annually in the United States.[5] These expensive health problems can be relieved through effective transportation and land use policies.[6] A review of 12 studies that created or enhanced access to places for physical activity found, on average, a 25 percent increase in the number of persons exercising at least three days per week.[7]

The U.S. Congress allocated $286.4 billion for the five-year SAFETEA-LU transportation bill in 2005. Walking and bicycling received only about 1 percent of the funding in SAFETEA-LU, but these modes already represent at least 9.5 percent of all trips in America. Traffic fatality data from states shows us that bicycle and pedestrian modes comprise an average of 13 percent of deaths on U.S. roadways. This shows the profound inequity in transportation funding in our current system. The chronic under-funding of walking and bicycling contributes to traffic congestion, obesity, economic loss, dependence on foreign oil and carbon emissions.

Since physical inactivity is costing an estimated $76 billion each year, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership believes that Congress should be carefully considering how to improve transportation systems so that these systems will encourage safe walking and bicycling as a means to increase physical activity. With the close relationship between the built environment and public health, we encourage Congress to make "improved public health" an overarching performance measure and theme for the next transportation bill for all transportation programs that are funded.

21st Century Performance Goals for Transportation

At this juncture, we can no longer continue to measure performance-based outcomes largely through automobile-centric approaches such as how quickly vehicles can move from point A to point B. This is an antiquated approach that does not address current priorities. Congress must create a more inclusive vision for America and evaluate our transportation performance-based goals through overarching themes such as improving public health and reducing carbon emissions. In addition, Congress must develop new ways to measure transportation performance. Current modeling of transportation needs by state Departments of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration do not even register positive impacts from bicycle and pedestrian use, which could be significant if the right questions are asked.

The way we build our roadways and transit systems affects whether people can even walk across the street safely to get to school, a store or a bus stop. Too often, roadways built with federal funding are designed only for automobiles, making it impossible for most people to walk or bicycle safely on a regular basis. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership encourages the next transportation bill to include a "complete streets" approach in which all roadways are designed to meet the needs of all transportation users including pedestrians, bicyclists, the disabled and transit users. Complete streets can help increase the capacity of the transportation network by giving people more transportation choices. We also need more transportation options for people of all ages and abilities such as multi-use pathways and traffic calmed streets that connect to residential areas and business districts. The Texas Transportation Institute found that providing more travel options, including public transportation, bicycling and walking facilities, is an important element in reducing congestion. As mentioned above, many studies show that when roads are better designed for bicycling, walking, and taking transit, more people choose these modes of transportation.

The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of physical activity each day for adults and 60 minutes of physical activity most days for children, but more than 60 percent of American adults are not regularly active, and 25 percent of the adult population is not active at all. These results

based on questionnaires are troubling enough, but new data based on objective monitoring of physical activity show less than 20 percent of adolescents and less than 5 percent of adults are meeting these guidelines.[8]

Physical inactivity is a crisis in America. Through building complete streets, funding comprehensive Safe Routes to School programs, and expanding programs such as Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program we can build an America that is healthier and stronger, and less dependent on foreign oil.

What Pedestrian and Bicycling Funding Achieves

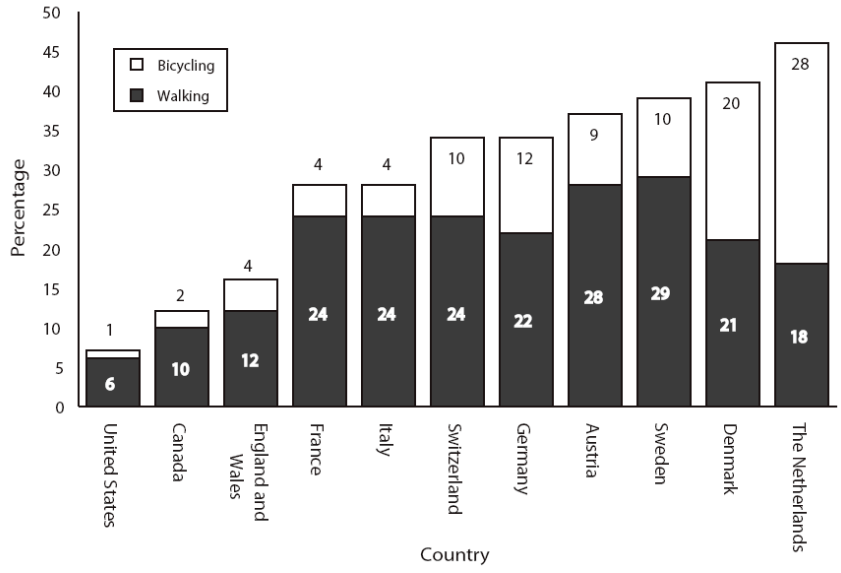
A recent report submitted to Congress in January 2008 on the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program that was funded in section 1807 of SAFETEA-LU http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/ntpp/index.htm shows that in Minneapolis MN, 19.6 percent of trips in that city are already being made by walking and bicycling. According to the report, walking and bicycling reduced automobile driving by 89 million miles in that city in the year 2006. Using an Environmental Protection Agency calculator for carbon reductions, this equates to approximately 39,000 tons of carbon that was not emitted into the atmosphere, and based on an average of $3 gallon/gas, walking and bicycling in Minneapolis resulted in avoided fuel cost of more than $13 million in one year. The reduction in climate emissions from Minneapolis' baseline walking and bicycling rate dwarfs the current contribution of more popularized CO2 reduction strategies such as hybrid vehicles.

Just imagine how many more people we could get bicycling and walking in Minneapolis and other communities if our bicycle and pedestrian systems were completed. In Minneapolis, like all cities and communities in America, many elements of planned bicycle and pedestrian networks have yet to be constructed, but when they are, mode share for walking and bicycling will continue to rise, along with the expected public health benefits of improved safety and physical activity. Concentrated investments in these networks and supporting programs over time yields increasingly cost-effective mobility improvements. Portland, Oregon, for instance, has seen a quintupling of bicycle miles traveled over the past 15 years in response to focused infrastructure development and supportive policies.

In California, a 2007 Safe Routes to School Mobility and Safety Analysis conducted by the California Department of Transportation showed that direct observations of schools that received capital safety improvements through the Safe Routes to School program yielded walking and bicycling increases that were often in the range of 20 percent to 200 percent. The report also indicated that the estimated safety benefit of the program was up to a 49 percent decrease in the childhood bicycle and pedestrian collision rates. Local studies have shown that parents driving children to schools can comprise 20 to 30 percent of the morning traffic congestion. Investing further in Safe Routes to School can help improve both transportation and health.

While some communities in America have made strides toward improving bicycle and pedestrian mode shares, the United States still has the lowest bicycle and pedestrian mode shares of any first world country. The following chart compares U.S. walking and bicycling rates with those in other countries and was extracted from a 2003 article in the American Journal of Public Health

by John Pucher, PhD and Lewis Dijkstra PhD titled *Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health: Lessons From The Netherlands and Germany*.



Note. Modal split distributions for different countries are not fully comparable owing to differences in trip definitions, survey methodologies, and urban area boundaries. The distributions given here are intended to show the approximate differences among countries and should not be used for exact comparisons.
Source. Transportation Research Board,[29] Table 2–2, p. 30.

FIGURE 1—Percentage of trips in urban areas made by walking and bicycling in North America and Europe, 1995.

This paper further goes on to explain that walking and bicycling are much more dangerous in the U.S. than in other countries. American pedestrians are roughly three times more likely to get killed than German pedestrians and over six times more likely than Dutch pedestrians. Per kilometer and per trip bicycled, American bicyclists are twice as likely to get killed as German bicyclists, and over three times as likely to get killed as Dutch bicyclists. It's no wonder that Americans cite safety as the number one reason that they do not walk and bicycle more often. This, however, is a problem with a solution.

Through U.S. and international studies, we've seen that investing in walking and bicycling is a cost-effective way to improve mobility and health, while reducing injuries and carbon emissions.

Conclusion: Creating A Healthy Transportation Vision and Plan for America

It's time for America to invest substantially in walking and bicycling infrastructure and programs, and to move forward with ensuring a "complete streets" approach for transportation spending, rather than funding transportation projects that make it difficult and unsafe for people to be able to walk and bicycle in their communities.

I urge Congress to hold a future hearing with public health professionals, researchers, and advocates who can further explain the relationship between transportation policies, land-use and public health, and how it would be beneficial to include the overarching themes of improved public health and reduction of carbon emissions in the next transportation bill. America incurs high costs due to a built environment that is hostile for walking and bicycling; it is no longer adequate for transportation, land use and public health to be examined through separate silos.

The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission Report presented to Congress in January 2008 indicated that it is critical for America's future to: "Create and sustain the preeminent surface transportation system in the world." To do this, Congress needs a bold new vision for how to define transportation in America that highlights how those transportation systems affect our ability to be physically active, our quality of life, and the livability of the communities where Americans live, work and attend schools.

As a nation we will not achieve goals in reducing congestion and carbon emissions, improving air quality and safety, and reducing obesity until a very high priority is placed on building transportation systems designed to encourage and support walking and bicycling.

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