

America Bikes America Walks American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association American Institute of Architects American Public Health Association
American School Health Association American Society of Landscape Architects
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals Bikes Belong Coalition Campaign to End Obesity
Congress for the New Urbanism EcoMom Alliance Friends of the Earth
International Mountain Bicycling Coalition League of American Bicyclists Local Government Commission
National Association for Health & Fitness National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of Regional Councils National Center for Bicycling & Walking
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity National Complete Streets Coalition
National Institutes of Health Bicycle Commuter Club National Recreation and Park Association
Natural Resources Defense Council National Wildlife Federation PolicyLink Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc.
Prevention Institute Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Smart Growth America Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking
Transportation for America Trust for America's Health United States Public Interest Research Group
YMCA of the USA...plus 130 state and local organizations

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November 7, 2008

The Honorable Chairman James L. Oberstar
House Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ranking Member John L. Mica
House Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request for the next transportation bill to include performance-based outcomes on public health

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

As you are drafting the legislation for the successor to SAFETEA-LU, we, the 171 undersigned national, state and local organizations, urge you to recognize the key role the federal government holds with respect to how surface transportation affects public health—in particular, outcomes on air quality, physical activity, and safety. We urge Congress to develop performance-based outcomes related to public health for the next transportation bill.

We understand that there are many important and fundamental considerations for the next transportation bill, such as financing the bill and managing the nation's aging infrastructure system. At the same time, we believe that this next transportation bill provides Congress with an important choice and responsibility at a critical time. As leaders who will design the future of our transportation system, you have a choice to make between creating additional costs or producing positive benefits for the health and safety of Americans and the quality of our air. These issues are inextricably linked to transportation and land use.

Congress should ensure that transportation projects improve opportunities for public health, and do not create additional public health hazards.

Physical Activity

Transportation policies are contributing to the obesity epidemic. Today in America, 67 percent of adults are overweight or obese and nearly one-third of all children are overweight or obese. In addition, childhood obesity has increased nearly five-fold for children aged 6-11 over the past forty years, and doctors state that the current generation might be the first in more than two hundred years to have shorter life spans than their parents.

Numerous studies have confirmed the relationship between the built environment and physical activity. Studies have consistently found that people living in auto-oriented communities 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. In contrast, studies show that individuals who walk, bicycle, or access public transit reduce the risk of obesity and gain public health benefits. This demonstrates how transportation shapes land-use, and how those factors are linked to obesity. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Community Guide to Preventative Services* indicates that building facilities for physical activity, such as sidewalks and trails, is an effective means of increasing physical activity.

Regarding costs, CDC estimated that obesity cost America \$117 billion in the year 2000, and another study showed that physical inactivity results in \$76 billion in direct medical costs annually in the United States. The Surgeon General recommends thirty minutes of physical activity each day for adults and sixty minutes of physical activity most days for children. New data based on objective monitoring of physical activity shows that less than 20 percent of adolescents and less than 5 percent of adults are meeting these guidelines.

Physical inactivity is a crisis in America. This crisis is directly related to the fact that our surface transportation system has largely ignored the needs of cyclists and pedestrians, and does not have a comprehensive, connected, and convenient public transit system. In many cases, Americans can not even safely cross the street or walk or bicycle a short distance to access public transit, stores, or schools because of hazardous conditions.

Safety and Injuries

Over the past two decades, traffic fatalities on United States roadways have averaged about 43,000 per year, and approximately 2.5 million people are injured on roadways each year. In addition to the loss of human life and health, traffic crashes cost Americans an estimated \$164 billion each year.

Further, 13 percent of traffic fatalities in the United States occur among pedestrians and bicyclists, a number that is grossly disproportionate to the approximately 1 percent of funding that supported these modes in SAFETEA-LU, and the approximately 9.5 percent of trips in the United States that are made by walking and bicycling.

Air Quality

Nearly half of Americans live in areas with unhealthy air quality. Air pollutants from cars, buses and trucks can worsen respiratory diseases, trigger asthma attacks, and are tied to heart disease and cancer. Asthma is on the rise in the United States, with one in ten children now suffering from this disease. Researchers have found that one in three schools are located in air pollution danger zones. The public health costs of pollution from cars and trucks have been estimated at between \$40 billion and \$64 billion per year.

In addition to creating air pollutants that contribute to poor air quality, transportation is responsible for one-third of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, and approximately half of carbon monoxide emissions. Curbing increasing trends in the amount that Americans drive and the aggregate amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the United States is imperative. Otherwise, these trends will soon undercut the progress achieved in reducing pollution through increased vehicle fuel efficiency standards and reduced carbon content of transportation fuels as provided for in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

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In conclusion, we urge Congress to recognize that there is an important federal role in the next transportation bill to improve public health and ensure that transportation projects do not continue to have

harmful effects on public health. We ask that you consider these themes as overarching performance outcomes in structuring the programs and priorities in next transportation bill. As demonstrated through the statistics presented above, American families and government agencies are spending more money each year on health care costs due to the negative impacts of transportation on public health than the federal government is spending annually to improve transportation.

To further highlight these critical issues, we urge the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to hold a hearing (or other suitable format as determined by Congress) on transportation policies' implications for public health. We also encourage you to hold a joint hearing with the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee with public health professionals, researchers, and advocates who can further explain the federal role in the relationships between transportation policies, land use, public health, air quality, and harmful automobile emissions. This hearing should also examine the need for improved surveillance, evaluation and research associated with measuring the costs and benefits of all transportation modes and public health outcomes.

Should you have any questions about the statistics or issues contained within in this letter, please contact Deb Hubsmit, Director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership at 415-454-7430 or deb@saferoutespartnership.org.

We, the undersigned, thank you for your leadership on transportation policies. We hope to have the opportunity to work with you on a transportation bill that will address the nation's infrastructure, safety and mobility needs, while also recognizing performance outcomes related to public health, including physical activity, safety and air quality.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

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Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking
Transportation for America
Trust for America's Health
United States Public Interest Research Group
YMCA of the USA

State and Local Organizations

Be Active New York State
Better World Club
4J School District, Safe Routes to School Program
Activate Martinsville & Henry County
Activate Omaha
ACTIVE Louisville
Active Williamsburg Alliance
Affinity Health System
Affinity Health System
Ashland Cycling Enthusiasts
Bay Area Bicycle Coalition
Bicycle Alliance of Washington
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Bicycle Coalition of the Ozarks
Bicycle Commuters of Anchorage
Bicycle Federation of WI
Bicycle Sport Shop
Bicycling Club of Milledgeville
Bicycling for Louisville
Bike Chattanooga
Bike Pittsburgh
BikeAlameda
BikeLane Coalition
BikeNet
Bloomington Transportation Options for People
Bowling Green Safe Routes to School Committee
Bridging the Gap
Buffalo County Nutrition Coalition
California Bicycle Coalition
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Park & Recreation Society
California Public Health Association-North
Cascade Bicycle Club
Centre Region Bicycle Coalition
Chain Reaction Cycling Club
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
City of Aspen Environmental Health Department
City of Fayetteville
City of Moscow
ClevelandBikes
Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST)
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Franklin County Health Department
Friends of Madison County Parks and Trails
Friends of Pathways
Go Bike

Health by Design
Healthy Lifestyle La Plata Coalition
Highland Elementary School Health and Safety
Highland Elementary School PTA
Indiana Bicycle Coalition
Indiana Public Health Association
IU/Wishard Level I Trauma Center, Wishard Health Services
Kansas City River Trails, Inc.
Knox County Health Department
Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition
Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth
Latino Health Access
Lebanon Valley Bicycle Club
Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
LiveWell Commerce City
Lockheed Martin Recreation Association Bicycle Club
Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
Louisiana Public Health Institute
Manitowoc County Kids Coalition for Activity and Nutrition
Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Mark J. Reynolds Memorial Bike Fund, Inc
Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department
Michigan Fitness Foundation
Mid-America Regional Council
Missouri Bicycle Federation, Inc.
North Carolina Active Transportation Alliance
North County Cycle Club
Oklahoma Bicycling Coalition
Ozark Greenways, Inc.
Parks & Trails New York
Partnerships for Healthy Communities
Pepin County Nutrition Coalition
Polk County Health Department
Positive Spin
PPH Partners
Preserve Our Climate
Red Dirt Pedalers, Stillwater's bicycle club
Regent Neighborhood Association, Transportation and Traffic Committee
Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates (SABA)
Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
Safe Kids Sonoma County
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition
San Francisco Department of Public Health
San Luis Obispo County Bicycle Coalition
San Mateo County Health Department
Sharebike
Shifting Gears Bicycles

Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition
Slavic Village Development
Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
Southern California Public Health Association
St. Croix Regional Medical Center
St. Louis Regional Bicycle Federation
St. Paul Smart Trips
State Trails Advisory Committee for Montana
Sumter County Active Lifestyles
The Atlanta Bicycle Campaign
The PedNet Coalition
The Queen's Medical Center
The Strategic Alliance
Trailnet
Train with Rainey
Transportation Alternatives for Marin
Tri-County Health Department
UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center

Upper Valley Trails Alliance
Virginia Association for Health, Physical
Education, Recreation & Dance (VAHPERD)
Walk/Bike Nashville
Walk+Roll Cleveland
WalkBikeBerks
WalkBoston
WALKSacramento
WalkSanDiego
Washington Area Bicycle Association
Washington Bike Law
Washington County Health Department
Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition
Washtenaw County Public Health Department
Wisconsin Walks
www.bikecommuter.com
Xccent, Inc
Yellowstone Valley PTA Council