

Support the America Bikes Agenda

Issue

Ask your members of Congress to support the America Bikes Agenda in the upcoming authorization of the Federal transportation bill.

Background

Every five or six years, Congress rewrites the rules that determine how State Department's of Transportation and other agencies can spend funds generated by the federal gas tax. Currently bicycling and walking account for 10 percent of all trips but unfortunately, only 1 percent of the federal transportation funds are invested in these modes. The America Bikes coalition, representing eight major national bicycling and walking groups, seeks the necessary policy changes and investment to double the level of non-motorized travel in this country. In addition to dramatically increasing funding for successful programs such as Safe Routes to School and creating a new focused investment program to complete Active Transportation networks in metropolitan areas, the America Bikes Coalition seeks a national Complete Streets law and a significant elevation of the status of two modes. More details of the America Bikes agenda are provided in a separate fact sheet in your program book. The America Bikes Coalition is working with the broader transportation reform movement, primarily Transportation for America, to ensure a wise investment of all transportation funds. We want to improve overall accountability and establish meaningful performance measures in the legislation. We want to fix existing streets and highways (rather than add new capacity), improve transit service, and encourage sustainable development, all of which will benefit bicyclists and pedestrians.

Benefits

When America bikes, America benefits! President Obama has outlined ambitious goals for energy independence, health and climate change that will only be met if we reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled, increase physical activity levels, and switch to cleaner, healthier modes of travel – especially for short trips. That translates very simply to a pressing need to get more people riding and walking in their

communities. With all eyes on economic recovery, Congressman Blumenauer (D-OR) has highlighted that for every million dollars invested in bicycling improvements and trails, local economies gain 65 jobs and \$50 million to \$100 million in additional economic activity. In his community of Portland, Ore., bicycle use has increased 144% since 2000, without any increase in crashes, and the city has welcomed 50 new bicycle-related businesses in just the past two years. Promoting bicycling and walking is not just a nice thing to do; it is an essential component of economic recovery and building a sustainable future.

Status

The current transportation law, The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) expires on September 30, 2009 – by which time it must either be extended or re-written. Leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – Chairman Oberstar (D-MN) and Ranking Minority Member John Mica (R-FL) – said recently that they hope to draft a bill for a vote before the end of May. In the Senate, the leadership of the critical Environment & Public Works and Commerce Committees has made clear their desire to more strongly deal with congestion, air quality and climate change issues in the legislation. The American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials is recommending a \$545 billion bill, up from \$286 billion in SAFETEA-LU – just one example of why funding issues are going to be critical in the overall debate on the next bill – with less earmarking, significantly fewer programs, and much greater discretion left to State DOTs. There are two important stand-alone legislative proposals that will help lay the groundwork for the America Bikes agenda in the overall authorization debate: the Complete Streets Act of 2009, and the Clean, Low Emission, Affordable, New Transportation Efficiency Act (CLEAN TEA). More information on these two proposals is provided in the following pages.

For More Information

To learn more, contact Caron Whitaker, Campaign Director, America Bikes Coalition, at 202-215-3908 or visit www.americabikes.com

CLEAN-TEA: The Clean, Low-Emission, Affordable, New Transportation Efficiency Act

Issue

The transportation sector is the second largest and fastest-growing contributor to U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Climate legislation must be linked to transportation policy so that transportation alternatives, paired with more efficient land use, become critical tools if we are serious about addressing climate change.

Background

Despite some stagnation in the last year because of the economy; driving, or vehicle miles traveled rates, have grown by three times the rate of population growth over the past 15 years, and is set to grow by 50 percent by 2030. This is largely because the vast majority of our communities are designed in ways that give people no other option but to drive everywhere. While there has been a federal focus on increasing fuel economy of vehicles and decreasing carbon content in fuels, these strategies alone will not be enough to slow and reverse overall GHG emissions from the transportation sector. The number of miles that vehicles travel is the critical, but often forgotten, third leg of the transportation stool.

Benefits

The technology to create compact communities which promote biking, walking and enhance public transportation exists today. Communities like Arlington, Virginia and Portland, Ore. have been doing this for years with proven results. Portland, with a reputation as a livable, healthy, and prosperous city, saved the equivalent of \$2.6 billion annually in gasoline and time because of measures they implemented to reduce the need for residents to drive, according to a CEO for Cities report. Per capita, VMT in Portland is 20 percent lower than the national average for other large metro areas. The average American who lives in an area that promotes biking, walking and has transit spends only 9 percent of their income on transportation, while a person living in an area that requires driving spends more than 25 percent of their income each month on transportation. In every survey the National

Association of Realtors has done, more than half of the respondents say they want to live in communities that provide for bike, walking and public transportation access. Using smart growth strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a win for the environment, the economy, and the quality of life for Americans.

Status

We expect CLEAN-TEA to be introduced in this Congress by Senators Carper (D-DE) and Specter (R-PA) and Representatives Blumenauer (D-OR), Tauscher (D-CA), and LaTourette (R-OH). CLEAN-TEA aims to lower emissions from the transportation sector by setting aside 10 percent of funds generated from the auction of carbon emissions allowances from any future climate bill to fund a Low Greenhouse Gas Transportation Fund. Revenues would be distributed by formula to states and MPO's based upon their transportation GHG reduction plans. Eligible projects would include transit, passenger and freight rail, biking and pedestrian.

For More Information

To learn more, contact Stephanie Potts, Policy Analyst, Smart Growth America, at spots@smarthgrowthamerica.org or 202-207-3355.

Complete Streets

Issue

Complete streets policies simply require that the safety, interests and convenience of all users, including motorists, pedestrians, transit users, bicyclists, and those who travel with mobility aids, are considered in the design and construction of transportation projects. The public right-of-way, our roads, should be designed and built for safe travel by everyone. Unsafe streets are a barrier, especially to the most vulnerable users of our transportation system — children, older adults and disabled people. A 2008 study released by AARP of people 55 and older found that 40 percent did not have adequate access to sidewalks; 55 percent do not have access to bike lanes; 48 percent did not have a comfortable place to wait for the bus; and 47 percent felt unsafe crossing the major streets near their homes.

Background

Communities across the country have built many miles of streets and roads that are unsafe for people traveling by foot, bicycle or taking public transportation. These roadways often lack sidewalks, crosswalks, and space for bicyclists and make no room for transit riders or accommodations for people with disabilities. Forty percent of all metro area trips are two miles or less – an easy distance for bicycling, walking or catching a shuttle bus – but most of these trips are now taken by car. We need to change the old road building habits. Currently about 98 percent of transportation funding is going to projects that actually make cycling and walking less desirable, convenient and safe. An effective, enforceable and measurable complete streets policy, consistently applied to all transportation investments, would ensure that the needs of all users of the right-of-way are taken into account. More than 80 jurisdictions spanning all regions of the country have adopted complete streets policies through legislation, internal agency policies and design manuals. Federal guidance has recommended complete streets practice for years but few states follow it. This must become a federal priority as well.

Benefits

Complete Streets provide a full menu of transportation options to meet the needs of everyone using the road:

- They are more cost effective because by building streets right the first time money is saved on retrofits.
- They address climate change and reduce dependence on foreign oil by providing safe and comfortable transportation options that allow people to leave their cars at home, especially for the many short trips easily made on foot or by bike.
- They provide safe and convenient access for children to travel safely to school, those on foot and bike to travel to their destinations, and can help make public transportation an attractive option.
- Safe, multi-modal streets in business districts also become engines for economic revitalization.

Status

We expect Senator Tom Harkin (D- IA) and Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA) to introduce The Complete Streets Act of 2009 in the 111th Congress. The legislation defines effective, flexible, complete streets policies and directs state Departments of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations to adopt the policies. The legislation further directs the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to ensure compliance and report to Congress on what the state DOTs and MPOs are doing to comply with the policy. States that do not comply would have a small percentage of their State's surface transportation funds directed towards safety projects.

For More Information

To learn more, contact Walter Finch, Advocacy Director, League of American Bicyclists, at 202-822-1333 or visit www.completestreet.org.

America Bikes Recommendations for Transportation Authorization

As the 111th Congress prepares to write new transportation legislation, Americans are increasingly searching for solutions to tight family budgets, rising health costs, climate change, oil dependence, traffic congestion and pollution. Despite a small current investment of resources, bicycling and walking already account for 10 percent of all trips and the potential clearly exists to double that share. Forty percent of all trips in the United States are just two miles or less and yet the vast majority are made by car. These short car trips are the most polluting and energy intensive as well as the easiest to shift to bicycling and walking.

An investment of just 3 percent of the next transportation bill will enable our nation to move decisively towards a goal of increasing the share of trips taken by bicycling and walking from 10 percent to 20 percent. Such a shift from driving to bicycling and walking will provide tens of billions of dollars per year in economic, health, energy, environmental, safety, and congestion relief benefits.

America Bikes asks Congress to enact a federal transportation law that meets these challenges and measures progress in terms of cost effectiveness, clean air, energy independence and job creation as well as safe, healthy, and effective transportation choices. America Bikes urges Congress to:

Complete the Streets

Enact a National Complete Streets policy that ensures all new and reconstructed roads are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities.

Complete Active Transportation Systems

Focus increased investment on completing seamless networks of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails, especially in cities; towns; and suburban areas, to enable a greater percentage of short trips to be made by foot and bike. These networks should be accessible and safe for all users and connect pedestrians and bicyclists to improved public transportation services.

Invest in Safety

- Require highway safety funds be spent in proportion to fatalities. Currently, bicyclists and pedestrians account for 13 percent of the fatalities on our roadways, but less than 1 percent of safety funding is spent on improvements to make roads safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Significantly increase funding for Safe Routes to Schools programs.

Promote Biking and Walking

- Ensure the US Department of Transportation recognizes biking and walking as important modes of transportation and prioritizes the two modes in its administrative structure.
- Give USDOT the tools and resources to measure and enforce progress in increasing the share of trips taken by bicycling and walking and to coordinate active transportation programs across all federal agencies. Contact: Caron Whitaker at 202-841-7729 or caron@americabikes.org