



## **Recommendations for the 2010 Federal Transportation Bill: Improving Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Can Create Safe and Livable Communities All Across America**

*Remarks made by Deb Hubsmith, Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, [www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org)*

*U.S. Department of Transportation's Surface Transportation Reauthorization Outreach Meeting with Secretary Ray LaHood and Senator Barbara Boxer on February 19, 2010 in Los Angeles, California.*

### **Leadership**

I'm honored to have the opportunity to speak today on transportation safety with respect to pedestrians and bicyclists. I greatly appreciate Secretary LaHood's focus on livability and sustainability in designing transportation systems, and look forward to further collaboration and to seeing these principles integrated into transportation design and decision making.

In the United States, we need continued and enhanced leadership at national, state, regional and local levels. Leadership on the transportation bill includes stating clear goals for a vision of transportation in America, including national transportation objectives that set benchmarks for increased mode share of bicycling and walking, and for reducing crashes. I also recommend health performance-based outcomes associated with increasing physical activity which will benefit all Americans and combat childhood obesity, in line with the First Lady's new initiative.

### **The Problem**

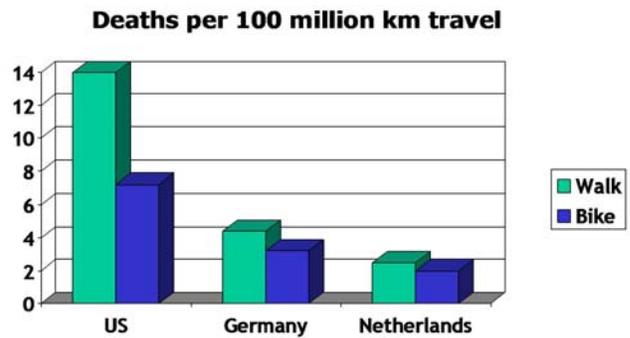
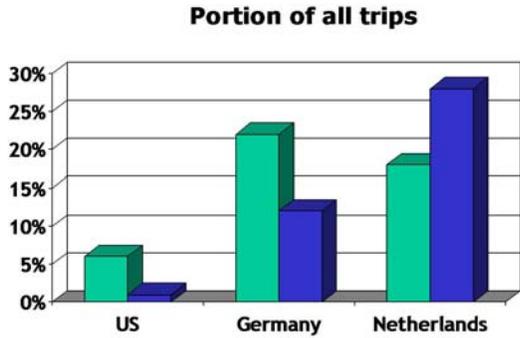
Simply put, currently it's not safe to walk or bicycle in America. In the last 15 years, more than 76,000 Americans have been killed while crossing or walking along a street in their community. More than 43,000 Americans – including 3,906 children under 16 – have been killed this decade alone. This is the equivalent of a jumbo jet going down roughly every month, yet it receives nothing like the kind of attention that would surely follow such a disaster.<sup>1</sup> The problems associated with a lack of bicycle and pedestrian safety in America affect all of us.

This safety issue has become so extreme because in the United States, the design of streets and roads has largely ignored human factors, including considerations for how pedestrians and bicyclists can cross the street and travel to designations like schools, shopping, and work places. Now there is an increasing recognition that we need a sea of change in how our roadways are designed – we need to create complete streets and safe routes to school.

The problem of bicycle and pedestrian safety is rooted in how we allocate transportation dollars at the national level. Nationwide, just 1.2 percent of funds authorized under the federal transportation law, SAFETEA-LU, have been allocated for projects to improve the safety of walking and bicycling,<sup>2</sup> even though pedestrians and bicyclists comprise 13 percent of all traffic deaths<sup>3</sup> and 12 percent of total trips.<sup>4</sup> Safety issues are both real and perceived; it is a critical factor in the quality of life in all communities.

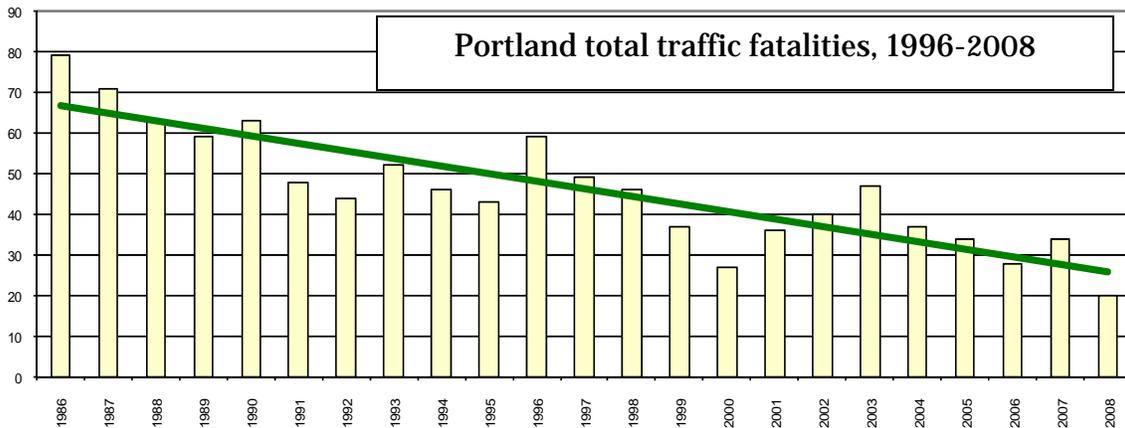
### **Bicycle/Pedestrian Investment Increases Both Use and Safety**

There is a huge potential to increase walking and bicycling in America, as 40% of U.S. trips are two miles or less in length and the average bike trips is a little over 2 miles.<sup>5</sup> Bicycling and walking in America is on the rise, increasing 25% from 2001. However, our mode share in the U.S. pales in comparison to other countries. In addition, it's much more dangerous to walk and bicycle in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

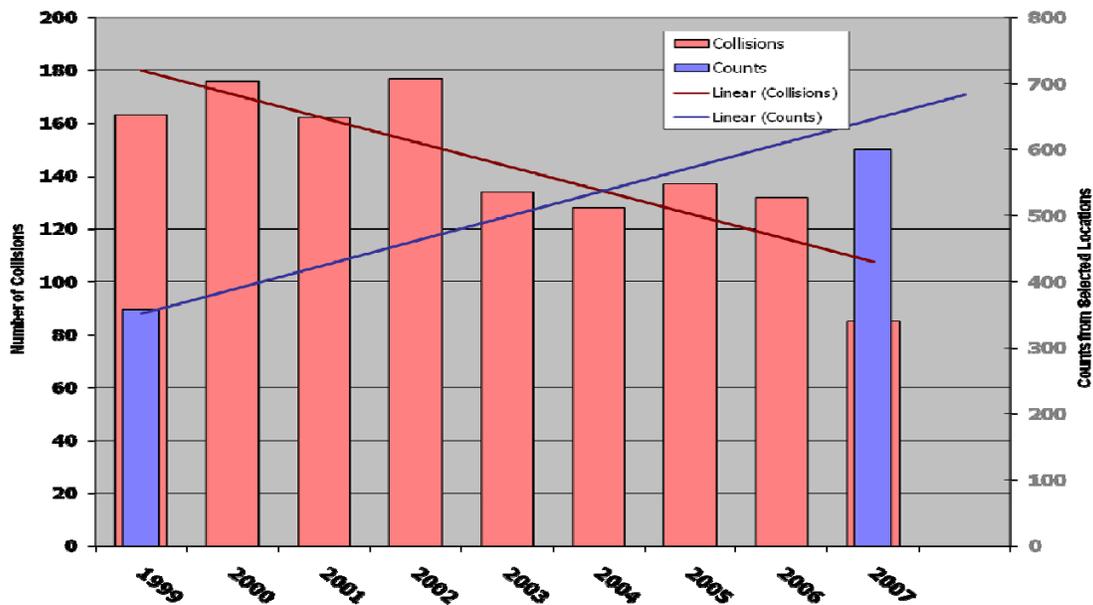


The implementation of Safe Routes to School programs and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure projects in the U.S. have demonstrated that “if you build it they will come,” and that crashes decrease when there are dedicated facilities that support walking and bicycling. For example:

- In Portland, OR traffic fatalities per 100,000 are declining six times faster than the rest of the U.S., and their data shows that conditions that improve multi-modal transportation improve safety for everyone: speed reduction, less DUIs, better compliance with traffic rules, and better organization of modes.<sup>7</sup>



- In Marin County, CA, one of four of the sites implementing the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (section 1807 of SAFETEA-LU), bicycle and pedestrian investment has also led to increase mode share and decreased crash rates.<sup>8</sup>



Safe Routes to School efforts have also been successful for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and changing the habits of an entire generation. For example:<sup>9</sup>

- In Miami-Dade County, FL, since the launch of the WalkSafe™ child pedestrian safety program in 2001, there has been a 43 percent decrease in the total number of children ages 0-14 hit by cars.
- An analysis comparing bicycle crash rates in Maine for the eight years before their Bicycle Safety Education Program was implemented (1992 to 1999) with the first eight years the program has been offered (2000-2007) reveals a 51 percent drop in bicycle crashes for children aged 10-14.

## Reauthorization Recommendations

### Funding

To improve safety and livability in America, we need increased funding in the next transportation authorization for bicycle and facilities, including:

- 1) **Safe Routes to School** (section 1404 of SAFETEA-LU): currently only one out of five projects are funded in California. We support the provisions in S1156 which would increase funding for SRTS, reduce regulatory burdens associated with implementation of these small and environmentally beneficial projects, and allow funding for high school projects. In some communities, 20 to 30% of morning traffic is parents driving their children to schools. A California study by UC Berkeley showed that SRTS projects increase walking and bicycling in the range of 20 to 200% and have safety benefits up to 49%.<sup>10</sup>
- 2) **Transportation Enhancements:** these projects address safety and increase physical activity. We also need more flexibility in general transportation funding streams, to allow further investment in bicycle and pedestrians facilities as needed to meet proposed national transportation objectives and performance targets.
- 3) **Active Transportation Networks:** the next transportation bill should create a competitive grant program to build Active Transportation Networks across America. These communities would be charged with continuing to monitor the results of the investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure related to safety, shifting mode share, improvement in air quality, benefits to the economy, etc. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy points out the enormous economic benefits associated with investing in active transportation systems.<sup>11</sup>
- 4) **Transit Funding:** it would be beneficial for transit funding to be spent on a wider catchment area to expand bicycle and pedestrian access to transit.
- 5) **Fair Share for Safety:** currently less than 1% of Highway Safety funding is spent on bicycle and pedestrian safety while these modes are 13% of fatalities.<sup>12</sup> Here in California, 20% of traffic fatalities are bicyclists and pedestrians. HSIP should be reformed to require a fair share for safety in each state, ensuring that the percentage of bicycle and pedestrian deaths equals the percentage of safety money spent on nonmotorized safety.

Federal guidelines should also encourage communities to invest in traffic calming to improve neighborhood streets to increase safety and livability. A big part of traffic calming is reducing speeds of automobiles. Laboratory tests show that in a collision between a car and a pedestrian, the survival rate of the pedestrian decreases dramatically as the car speed increases: at a speed of 20 miles/hour, 'only' 5 percent of pedestrians are killed; at 30 miles/hour 45 percent of pedestrians are killed, and at 40 miles/hour 85 percent are expected to be killed.<sup>13</sup> The federal government could undertake awareness campaigns about the impact of speed on safety, and incentivize states to allow lower speed limits, increase enforcement for speed, and discourage advertising that glorifies speed.

### Complete Streets Policy

Complete streets policies ensure that roads are designed, built, and operated for the safety of everyone using them. This is important for creating connections between homes and destinations, and for developing safe routes to schools, shopping and work. State standards and practices that often dominate local road projects impede the complete streets approach, and federal funding criteria do not reward the creation of complete streets. We applaud Chairman Oberstar's Surface Transportation Authorization Act draft for including a strong provision requiring that federally funded road projects provide for safe travel by everyone using the corridor, and emphasizing the repair and retrofit of our

existing infrastructure. We hope the final Federal Transportation bill includes this provision. We also support a "fix it for all" policy when repairing or retrofitting infrastructure. At the most fundamental level, communities are seeking safer roads. At its most advanced, a complete streets approach results in vibrant streets vital to livable communities.

### **Design is Related to Safety**

In 2009, the Federal Highway Administration, the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Technology sponsored an international tour to five countries and 11 cities for a Scan on Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety and Mobility. Recommendations from this Scan should be incorporated into design standards. The federal government should sponsor additional research, conduct pilots, encourage and fast track bicycle and pedestrian innovations such as colored bike lanes, advance boxes and cycle tracks. These guidelines should also be codified in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Cities for Cycling, <http://www.nacto.org/citiesforcycling.html>, is also working on compiling best practices which should be codified by the federal government as they improve safety.

### **Data and Research**

The next transportation bill should include additional funding for bicycle and pedestrian research. FHWA should require that state DOTs collect data on bicycle and pedestrian safety, use and facilities, and also for all projects, including Safe Routes to School. We encourage major U.S. cities to participate in the National Bicycle and Pedestrian documentation project; currently the four sites associated with the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program are participating.

### **Conclusion**

The cornerstone to livability in America is creating safe communities where people can walk and bicycle. An indicator for livability is – can our children walk or bicycle to schools? Survey after survey points to a huge desire among people to ride bicycles and walk more but there is a reluctance to do so because of fear that there's no safe place to ride or walk and that cars and drivers are a threat. It has become increasingly clear that these clean, human-powered modes of transportation are an essential part of efforts to limit the negative impacts of traffic congestion, oil dependency and climate change. A focus on bicycle and pedestrian safety will also boost the economy – studies show increases in property values near trails, and people shop locally when there are facilities connecting homes with stores, which supports revitalizing local communities.<sup>14</sup> While it is current unnecessarily dangerous for pedestrians to walk, health experts are making the case that it can be just as deadly not to walk or bike. Active transportation is critical to increasing levels of healthy exercise and reducing obesity and heart disease. We look forward to working with the US DOT, Congress, the President and the First Lady on developing a transportation agenda that will create a safe and healthy America.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dangerous by Design," Transportation for America. October 2009. <http://t4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign/>

<sup>2</sup> "Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2010 Benchmarking Report," Alliance for Bicycling and Walking, February 2010. <http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/C529#findings>

<sup>3</sup> "Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2010 Benchmarking Report," Alliance for Bicycling and Walking, February 2010. <http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/index.php/site/memberservices/C529#findings>

<sup>4</sup> 2009 National Household Travel Survey.

<sup>5</sup> 2009 National Household Travel Survey

<sup>6</sup> J. Pucher and L. Dijkstra, "Promoting safe walking and cycling to improve public health: lessons from The Netherlands and Germany." American Journal of Public Health, September 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Geller, City of Portland, February 16, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Provided by [www.walkbikemarin.org](http://www.walkbikemarin.org)

<sup>9</sup> Safe Routes to School National Partnership, "Putting Traffic Safety First - How Safe Routes to School Initiatives Protect Children Walking and Bicycling," [http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/Safety\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/Safety_report_final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> M Orenstein, N Gutierrez, T Rice, J Cooper, and D Ragland, "Safe Routes to School Safety and Mobility Analysis" (April 1, 2007). UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center. <http://repositories.cdlib.org/its/tsc/UCB-TSC-RR-2007-1>

<sup>11</sup> Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, "Active Transportation for America," October 2008. [http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/atfa/ATFA\\_20081020.pdf](http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/atfa/ATFA_20081020.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.americabikes.org/docs/Platform.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Federal Highway Administration (2002). Pedestrian Facilities Users Guide: Providing Safety and Mobility.

<sup>14</sup> G Barnes, "Benefits of Bicycling in Minnesota," <http://www.lrrb.org/pdf/200450.pdf>.