

**SUPPORT & CO-SPONSOR COMPLETE STREETS BILLS
S. 2686 INTRODUCED BY SEN. HARKIN AND CARPER AND H.R. 5951 FROM REP. MATSUI**

What the Bill Does:

The Complete Streets Act of 2008 (S. 2686), introduced by Senators Harkin (IA) and Carper (DE) and Safe and Complete Streets Act of 2008 (H.R. 5951) introduced by Rep. Matsui (CA) ensure that future transportation investments made by state Departments of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations create appropriate and safe transportation facilities for all those using the road – motorists, transit vehicles and riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

More than 50 jurisdictions spanning all regions of the country have adopted complete streets policies that direct transportation planners to consider the needs of all users when transportation investment decisions are made. These policies ensure that streets don't create barriers for children, disabled users, older persons, or those who do not drive, making sure that roads are designed and updated to allow everyone the freedom to travel safely.

The legislation builds on these successful state and local policies to define effective complete streets policies, and to direct state DOTs and MPOs to adopt such policies and apply them to upcoming transportation projects. The bill also authorizes needed research and dissemination of complete streets best practices.

Contact Richard Bender with Senator Harkin's office if you would like more information or to sign on to S. 2686. Contact Sam Stefanki with Congresswoman Matsui's office if you would like more information or to sign on to H.R. 5951.

Contact the National Complete Streets Coalition (www.completestreets.org) to learn about the diverse groups working together to enact complete streets policies across the country.

Incomplete streets deny citizens safety, choice

The streets of our cities and towns ought to be for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. But too many streets are designed only for speeding cars, or worse, creeping traffic jams. They are unsafe for people on foot or bike — and unpleasant for everybody.

About one-third of Americans do not drive, including an increasing number of seniors and low income Americans who cannot afford cars. Yet just like everyone else, they require access to a variety of other transportation options in order to get to work, school, shops and medical visits, and to take part in social, civic and volunteer activities.

In Houston, 3 out of 5 disabled and older residents do not have sidewalks between their home and the nearest bus stop; nearly three-quarters also lack curb ramps and bus shelters nearby. As a result, fewer than 10% of these citizens use public transportation, even though 50 percent live within 2 blocks of a bus stop.

Streets designed solely for automobile travel also put people at risk. Close to 5,000 pedestrians and bicyclists die each year on U.S. roads, and more than 70,000 are injured. In a recent survey of Florida residents, only 25 percent felt it was safe to walk along or to cross the closest U.S. or State road.

Respondents identified deficiencies in the number and condition of sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting in their communities.

Post World War II growth patterns and street designs tend to favor the automobile over walking and bicycling. The health impacts are clear – one study found that, on a daily basis, each additional hour spent in the car is associated with a *6% increase* in the likelihood of obesity, while each additional kilometer walked is associated with a *5% reduction*.

The Benefits of Complete Streets

Complete streets provide a full menu of transportation options to meet the needs of everyone using the road. Children are able to safely travel to school, those on foot and bike have convenient routes to their destinations, and public transit is accessible by all users.

Complete Streets **fight climate change** and **reduce our dependence on foreign oil**– they are essential if we are serious about helping people drive less and **save money on gas**. The 2001 National Household Transportation Survey reveals that 50% of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less, 28% of all metropolitan trips are one mile or less – distances easily traversed by foot or bicycle. Yet 65 percent of those trips under one mile are now made by automobile, in part because of incomplete streets that make it dangerous or unpleasant to walk, bicycle, or take transit. Complete streets policies should be an element of the nation’s strategy for addressing climate change and energy security. As gas prices rise, complete streets help people avoid the pain at the pump.

Complete streets can help **increase the capacity of the transportation network** by giving people more choices. The Texas Transportation Institute found that providing more travel options, including bicycling and walking facilities, are important elements in reducing congestion.

Complete Streets direct **a better use of taxpayer dollars**. In Illinois, the statewide complete streets law was passed last year to avoid unnecessary expense. Lawmakers had heard the story of a bridge near Cary, Illinois that was built without any safe way to cross it via foot or bicycle. After several deaths, and a successful wrongful-death lawsuit filed by the parents of a teenager killed on the bridge, the state DOT had to go back at great expense and retrofit the existing bridge, adding a path to the span. It would have far less expensive to do it right, the first time.

Complete streets **improve pedestrian safety**. Designing the street with pedestrians in mind -- sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers -- may reduce pedestrian risk by as much as 28%.

Complete streets **encourage healthy and active lifestyles**. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels, while just 27% of those lacking safe options were active enough. Nearly one third of transit users meet the Surgeon General’s daily activity recommendations just through their routine travels.

A community with a complete streets policy routinely considers the needs of all users when transportation investment decisions are made. These policies, adopted in more than 50 states, cities, and regions, ensure streets don’t create barriers for children, disabled users, senior citizens, or those who do not drive. They make sure that roads are designed and updated to allow even the most vulnerable users to travel safely.

Citations available upon request. For more information, visit www.completestreets.org.