While the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reported a two percent decrease in roadway fatalities between 2010 and 2011, the number of pedestrian deaths increased by three percent and bicyclist deaths by nine percent over the same period. Of the more than 47,000 pedestrian fatalities from 2000 to 2009, 67 percent occurred on federal-aid roadways.

The Safe Streets Act will ensure that communities use proven design elements to improve the safety of all roadway users, including people driving cars, walking, biking and taking public transit. These measures reduce pedestrian crashes: 88 percent reduction with sidewalks; 69 percent with hybrid beacons; and 39 percent with medians. Some measures improve safety for all users by reducing speeds in residential areas and on Main Streets. Crashes are more likely to result in pedestrian fatalities when cars are traveling at higher speeds: at 40 mph, 80 percent die; at 30 mph, 40 percent; and at 20 mph, 5 percent.

The Safe Streets Act (S. 2004/H.R. 2468) requires states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations to adopt inclusive transportation policies for future projects within two years. Federal legislation will ensure consistency and flexibility in the processes and standards that direct road-building at all levels of governance. It will help ensure effective practice and proven safety measures become federal guidelines, leading to improved safety on community streets.

Support the Safe Streets Act (S. 2004/H.R. 2468) and create safer, more inviting streets for everyone

Communities nationwide are changing transportation policy to ensure their future road projects are planned, designed, operated and maintained for the safety of all users. More than 600 local, regional and state entities have adopted policies that mirror the proposed approach in the Safe Streets Act. These policies transform streets and the lives of the people who reside, shop, and travel along them.

Join Senator Mark Begich, Senator Brian Schatz, Congresswoman Doris Matsui and Congressman David Joyce in supporting the Safe Streets Act to promote safer streets for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

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To cosponsor H.R. 2468, please contact Jill Harrelson, Legislative Assistant, Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui at (202) 225-7163 or jill.harrelson@mail.house.gov; or John Miceli, Legislative Director, Office of Congressman David Joyce at (202) 225-5731 or john.miceli@mail.house.gov.

To cosponsor S. 2004, please contact Stef Claus, Legislative Correspondent, Office of Senator Mark Begich at (202) 224-9546 or stef_claus@begich.senate.gov; or Georgia Gann, Legislative Assistant, Office of Senator Brian Schatz at (202) 224-3934 or georgia_gann@schatz.senate.gov.
The Safe Streets Act does not trigger any new spending. It instead requires more careful planning for transportation projects to incorporate safety improvements into these projects. This planning helps jurisdictions find effective measures that can be accomplished at little or no extra cost and without separate funding sources. A feasibility study by the Minnesota legislature finds that a safe streets policy does not significantly increase road improvement costs, yet provides valuable safety benefits.

In some cases, this planning saves communities money. In a reconstruction project, the Brown County, WI Highway Department narrowed an existing four-lane roadway into a three-lane street, adding bike lanes on each side and replacing expensive traffic signals with roundabouts. These changes saved the county $347,515—16.5 percent less than the project’s original estimate. The Washington State Department of Transportation determined that a safe streets process would save an average of $9 million per project, or about 30 percent, when rehabilitating highways that serve as small-town Main Streets.

**We aren’t necessarily talking about expensive widening projects or major redesigns of our roadways. These concepts can often be applied to existing streets by simply rethinking how we approach traffic flow and how we accommodate all modes of transportation.**
—Phil Broyles, Director of Public Works, Springfield, MO

Decisionmakers also realize that their communities’ competitive edge relies on their ability to integrate lifestyle choices with their transportation systems, which involves creating a broad range of transportation choices. In Charlotte, NC, according to local polls, residents continue to support the city’s Complete Streets work; overwhelmingly, 82 percent of residents believe that streets should be designed for all users.

To date, Charlotte’s City Council has invested $400 million to create a “great” street network, consisting of 13 miles of road conversions; 40 miles of signed bike routes; 40 miles of greenways and off-street paths; 75 miles of bike lanes; and 80 sidewalk improvements. The costs of these improvements were largely absorbed by varying annual costs of road-building, and the city has benefitted from higher property values, lower property taxes and improved safety for all road users.

The National Complete Streets Coalition, a program of Smart Growth America, seeks to fundamentally transform the look, feel and function of the roads and streets in our community, by changing the way most roads are planned, designed and constructed. Complete Streets policies direct transportation planners and engineers to consistently design with all users in mind. Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to advocating for better development strategies in communities nationwide. For additional information visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.