

June 5, 2008

Re: Support S. 2686 to create Complete Streets for safer, healthier communities

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Complete Streets Coalition, we are writing to encourage you to co-sponsor S. 2686, The Complete Streets Act of 2008, introduced by Senator Harkin.

This important piece of legislation would add a provision to Title 23 to 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.

The National Complete Streets Coalition is a diverse coalition of more than 50 organizations working in support of complete streets policies across the country. Our members range from user groups such as AARP, the League of American Bicyclists and the American Council of the Blind to industry groups such as the American Public Transportation Association and the American Planning Association (see a full list of members at: <http://www.completestreets.org/howeare.html>).

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. They ensure that our transportation investments create high quality streets that don't create barriers for children, disabled people, older persons, or those who do not drive. The Complete Streets Act of 2008 builds on these existing 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. For example, when a DOT or MPO is planning a new road construction or road widening project, they must look at who uses the road and adequately accommodate those users by providing appropriate infrastructure. The bill also authorizes needed research and dissemination of complete streets best practices.

Complete streets benefit American communities in numerous ways. Streets designed for all users are safer, can ease congestion, and are less costly in the long run.

- 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 public transportation, bicycling and walking facilities, is an important element in reducing congestion. Many studies show that when roads are better designed for bicycling, walking, and taking transit, more people do so.
- Complete streets **improve pedestrian safety**. The Federal Highway Administration has confirmed that designing the street with pedestrians in mind -- sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers -- significantly reduces pedestrian risk. About one-third of Americans do not drive, including low-income Americans who cannot afford cars and an increasing number of older adults. Whether they walk or bicycle directly to their destinations, or to public transportation, these individuals require safe access to get to work, school, shops and medical visits, and to take part in social, civic and volunteer activities. In 2006, nearly one quarter of pedestrian fatalities were children (8 percent) and older adults (15 percent).
- Complete streets make **better use of taxpayer dollars**. Illinois adopted a statewide complete streets law last year to help avoid the type of preventable expense that was incurred in the aftermath of several tragic accidents. A bridge near Cary, Illinois, built without

any safe way to cross it via foot or bicycle, led to several deaths, and a successful wrongful-death lawsuit filed by the parents of a teenager killed on the bridge. In response, the state DOT was required to retrofit the existing bridge, at great expense, by adding a path to the span.

Complete streets also make important contributions towards alleviating the serious national challenges of climate change and obesity. Complete streets promote clean air, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help children and adults get more physical activity.

- Complete streets **fight climate change** and **reduce our dependence on foreign oil**—they are an essential component in reducing automobile trips. The 2001 National Household Transportation Survey revealed that 50 percent of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less and 28 percent are one mile or less – distances easily traversed by foot or bicycle. Yet, 65 percent of 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.
- Complete streets **encourage healthy and active lifestyles**. A forthcoming international physical activity study has found that the more transit stops, sidewalks, and bike lanes are present near home, the more likely residents are to reach recommended daily physical activity levels. Nearly one third of transit users meet the Surgeon General’s daily activity recommendations just through their routine travels.

Please show your support for addressing these critical problems by contacting Richard Bender (Richard_Bender@harkin.senate.gov) or Jenelle Krishnamoorthy (Jenelle_Krishnamoorthy@harkin.senate.gov) in Senator Harkin’s office to co-sponsor S. 2686, The Complete Streets Act of 2008.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

AARP
America Bikes
America Walks
American Planning Association
American Public Transportation Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Bikes Belong
Campaign to End Obesity
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Environmental Defense
Friends of the Earth

League of American Bicyclists
National Association of REALTORS
National Center for Bicycling and Walking
National Recreation and Parks Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Reconnecting America
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Smart Growth America
Surface Transportation Policy Partnership
Thunderhead Alliance
Transportation Equity Network
Transport Worker’s Union
Trust for America’s Health
U.S. Public Interest Research Group
YMCA of the USA