



February 10, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4907

Re: Priorities for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Dear Chairman Obey:

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership works in partnership with hundreds of organizations across the country to make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to schools. By getting more children out of cars and onto their feet and bicycles, we are helping address our country's obesity epidemic, climate change crisis, and traffic and safety challenges. Building bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure creates jobs, and supports local economies through enhancing "Main Streets" throughout the nation.

As a conferee on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, you have the ability to ensure that at least a portion of the spending is targeted to healthy and green infrastructure improvements. We respectfully ask that you support the following three provisions in the conference report:

1. **Explicit funding for the Transportation Enhancements program.** Traditionally, 50-60% of the Transportation Enhancements program is spent on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects. Without explicit funding for this program, as the House bill provides through the sub-allocation of the STP program, it is unlikely that much of the highway construction funding will be used for creating healthy and green transportation options.
2. **The House funding level and language for school modernization grants.** This \$14 billion fund in the House bill gives school districts much-needed funding to make infrastructure upgrades that modernize schools and make them greener. The House language also includes improving bicycle and pedestrian access to schools as an eligible use of funding, which is an important component to reduce a school's carbon footprint. Making billions of dollars available to schools for modernization will get construction firms working.
3. **The House funding level for the Healthy Communities program.** The \$500 million the House provided for the CDC's Healthy Communities program will help local communities implement community wellness activities addressing critical problems like obesity, which costs Americans an estimated \$117 billion/year. Healthy Communities grants will help stimulate public health jobs while building stronger, healthier communities. For every dollar we invest in community prevention, it saves five dollars in health care costs in just five years.

Overall, it is important to understand that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements create construction jobs and use materials at the same or higher levels than road projects. Because the projects are often smaller in scope than a highway project, local construction and engineering firms are more likely to be selected. And after the projects are constructed, the new

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The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is hosted by the Bikes Belong Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

walkways and paths revitalize downtown areas, helping “Main Street” businesses. Adding safe sidewalks, crosswalks, pathways and bike lanes gives families cheaper transportation options to access workplaces, schools, businesses and public transit—an important factor given that transportation is the second largest expense for the average family. Finally, shifting people out of their cars and onto their feet and bicycles helps address our country’s obesity epidemic and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

The focus of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is rightly on creating and saving jobs as well as stimulating the economy. The smartest way to do that is on jobs and materials that put our nation on the path to a healthier, greener future. We ask that you take leadership on ensuring that the three aforementioned provisions and funding levels are included in the final conference report.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Margo Pedroso, Policy Manager, Safe Routes to School National Partnership at 301-292-1043 or margo@saferoutespartnership.org.

Sincerely,



Deb Hubsmith
Director