



America Bikes Analysis of
the Committee Draft of
the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009

I. A Federal Complete Streets Policy

America Bikes Platform Ask: Enact a National Complete Streets policy that ensures all new and reconstructed roads are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users, of all ages and abilities.

What's in the Bill: While the bill does not say “Complete Streets,” it refers to “Comprehensive Street Design Standards” (CSDS) that it similarly defined – A law or policy that includes (in part):

“the adequate accommodation, in all phases of project planning and development, of all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, children, older individuals, motorists (including motorcyclists), and individuals with disabilities;

The Standards are included in Section 109 as a planning requirement for all Federal-Aid Highways, meaning that any new project constructed with federal money (STP, CMAQ, HSIP, High Priority Projects, etc.) must take into account all users.

The bill does not require states and/or MPOs to have CSDS policies, but it does promote and encourage states to do so, and provides technical assistance and best practices for states and MPOs that request it.

Implications: This is a great addition to the safety and accessibility of our transportation system. While we hope the definition of the Standards are defined more clearly, requiring all Federal-Aid Highways to have the Standards and giving the Secretary the power to enforce them means that federally funded roads in all fifty states will be designed for all users, of all ages and abilities, to travel safely and conveniently.

II. Active Transportation Investment Fund

America Bikes Platform Ask: Create a new fund to support concentrated investment in completing active transportation systems in urban and metropolitan areas with the goal of shifting driving trips to walking and bicycling; and increase funding in existing programs, including Transportation Enhancements, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality and the Recreational Trails Programs.

What's in the Bill: The bill does not include a specific fund for active transportation, but it does have a new Metropolitan Mobility and Access Program (MMAP) that offers large grants to MPOs with populations over 500,000 with the goal of lowering congestion in metropolitan areas. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements are eligible under this program although neither is explicitly mentioned.

The MMAP program is part of a larger effort to devolve federal funding from the state level to the metropolitan level. The bill also sub-allocates Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds and some CMAQ funds to the metropolitan level as well.

Implications: The outcome of the MMAP program is unclear. While the goals of the program include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing access and livability, the program criteria are heavily weighted towards reducing congestion and travel delays. The program has great potential but will need continued advocacy and watchdog efforts to ensure the money is spent in a way that both reduces congestion and meets the goals of livability.

America Bikes believes the sub-allocation of TE and CMAQ funding to MPOs is an important step for bicycling and walking. We know that states that already sub-allocate their CMAQ funds are more likely to use CMAQ for bicycle and pedestrian projects. In general, bicycling and walking have consistently done better at the MPO level than at the state level.

III. Fair Share for Safety

America Bikes Platform Ask: Include explicit funding for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in both the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), which funds infrastructure improvements, and Section 402 Highway Safety Funds, which mostly funds education and encouragement programs.

Also, increase funding for Safe Routes to School (SRTS), expand SRTS to high schools and include language to expedite small projects.

What's in the Bill: While HSIP does not include any mode specific goals, instead giving states broad discretion on how to lower traffic fatalities and crashes, Section 402, which establishes performance measures for safety programs, requires the Secretary to set performance targets for states, including separate goals for bicycling fatalities, bicycling crashes, pedestrian fatalities and pedestrian crashes.

The SRTS provisions do not extend the program to high schools, but they do include project-expediting language that should help communities reduce the red tape that has surrounded the implementation of Safe Routes to School projects.

Implications: This has the potential to significantly improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety all across America depending on how it is implemented. Even without any change to HSIP, the changes to Section 402 give NHTSA the power to

reject any safety plan that will not meet sufficient bicycle and pedestrian goals, make changes to it if they so choose, and even withhold funding.

The SRTS expediting language is also a positive step. It is important to ensuring SRTS projects are built in a timely manner. This language also lays the foundation for other bicycle and pedestrian projects that get caught up in permitting requirements as stringent as if it were highway construction.

IV. Promote Bicycling and Walking

America Bikes Platform Ask: Create an entity in the Department of Transportation (DOT) that has the authority and adequate resources to effectively administer DOT bicycling and walking programs, and to coordinate with other Federal agencies.

What's in the Bill: One of the most exciting parts of the bill is the creation of an Office of Livability in the Federal Highway Administration that will manage a number of bicycling and walking programs including Safe Routes to Schools, the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program, transportation enhancements, the Recreational Trails Program and the U.S. Bicycle Route System. The bill also directs the Office of Livability to increase and improve data collection related to bicycling and walking and to collect and encourage best practices surrounding livability and sustainability.

Implications: This has amazing potential for bicycling and walking programs. While it remains to be seen the power and funding this new office ends up having, it is a big step in recognizing the importance of bicycling and walking to transportation. We hope the Office is given sufficient funding to achieve its mission and becomes a leader in promoting nonmotorized transportation.

In conclusion, the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009 includes a number of the provisions America Bikes has been advocating for. However, the current version of the bill does not include any funding levels, so a lot of important specifics remain to be seen.

America Bikes will continue to advocate for changes in the bill. We want to strengthen and expand the safety goals, explicitly include access goals and nonmotorized transportation in the MMAP program, and push for adequate funding for the Office of Livability and bicycle and pedestrian programs.

We would like to thank Chairman Oberstar for his leadership in crafting this monumental bill and look forward to working with him and Congress in the coming months.