



Safe Routes to School National Partnership Platform for the Reauthorization of MAP-21

The transportation reauthorization process that led to the creation of MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century) was full of challenges for Safe Routes to School, bicycling and walking. Given the fiscal pressures on the Highway Trust Fund and a strong ideological push against federal involvement in “local transportation issues,” MAP-21 ultimately consolidated many programs and ceded more decision-making authority and flexibility to the states. The result for funding for Safe Routes to School, bicycling and walking was a new consolidated program, Transportation Alternatives, with less overall funding, more ways in which states can transfer funds to other purposes, and more competition for the limited dollars.

Due to funding challenges, MAP-21 was authorized for only two years, meaning that it is again up for Congressional consideration by September 2014. We support ensuring that there is a robust and sustainable funding stream for the federal transportation system at large. Given the short length of MAP-21 and the significant funding challenges, it is expected that the primary focus of the reauthorization will be to identify a funding fix with limited policy changes.

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership supports a suite of recommendations that build on and strengthen certain aspects of MAP-21, while remaining within the structure created in MAP-21. While there is no longer dedicated funding for Safe Routes to School, with local control and adequate performance measures focusing on the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, we believe Safe Routes to School projects will continue to be funded.

Strengthen the Transportation Alternatives Program

In MAP-21, Congress implemented significant changes to funding for bicycling and walking through the creation of the Transportation Alternatives Program. Our recommendations for the next transportation bill work within the structure of Transportation Alternatives but seek to rectify some of the key challenges instituted in the last bill.

- **Solidify the funding for Transportation Alternatives.** With an overall funding cut of 30 percent that approaches 50 percent in some states, combined with the division of funding between states and large MPOs, the available amounts for projects in many areas are so small that they significantly limit competition for these funds. MAP-21 sets Transportation Alternatives at 2 percent of a state’s core highway funds; we suggest increasing that to 3 percent, which would restore the MAP-21 cuts. In addition, allowing states to transfer 50 percent of available funds to other programs creates a significant shortfall in dollars that local communities rely on to improve safety and accessibility for their residents. The transferability should be eliminated or significantly limited.
- **Give states and MPOs the ability to help low-income communities.** MAP-21 changed Safe Routes to School projects from 100 percent federally funded to requiring a 20 percent state or local match. This creates a significant barrier to small towns and low-income schools seeking to improve safety for children. We recommend allowing states the option to reduce or waive matching requirements for low-income applicants.
- **Address eligibility limitations.** We recommend that not-for-profit organizations and small metropolitan planning organizations be allowed to serve as project sponsors. Under MAP-21, these entities can only be partners and cannot be the project lead which has created challenges for states and localities.
- **Ease regulatory burdens.** We recommend ensuring effective use of federal dollars and avoid unnecessary delays in local project implementation by requiring the Federal Highway Administration and States to ease administrative burdens posed by title 23 and the Common Rule guidelines, while retaining protections for labor and the environment. These small projects are subject to the same rules and regulations as large highway projects, posing challenges and delays for cities and schools that implement these projects.

Address Rising Rates of Bicycle and Pedestrian Fatalities and Injuries

As a share of overall roadway fatalities, bicycling and walking fatalities are on the rise and now make up 15.8 percent of all traffic fatalities. Unfortunately, few states prioritize non-motorized safety in their usage of Highway Safety Improvement Program funds; from FY2007 to 2011, states used just 0.4 percent of their HSIP funds on non-motorized safety. We recommend that Congress implement some key changes that will ensure that states and regions understand their bicycle and pedestrian safety issues and plan safety interventions accordingly:

- Set a safety performance measure specifically for non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries.
- Fine-tune the Strategic Highway Safety Plan process to be more inclusive of locations with high crash potential before fatalities occur, to include bicycle and pedestrian elements in inventories of safe and unsafe roadway features, and to examine deaths and serious injuries along corridors instead of just in “hot spots.”
- Provide additional resources to states or regions with high rates of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities, either through a special rule regarding Strategic Highway Safety Plan strategies or by directing additional funds to safety non-attainment areas.
- Add Safe Routes to School projects to the list of eligible Highway Safety Improvement Program projects.
- Study the effects of the 85th percentile speed standard, which requires the speed limit of roads to be set at the speed at which most drivers drive, and its impact on bicycle and pedestrian safety—particularly in and around school zones.

Improve Data Collection and Research

With the shift towards performance-based planning, it is even more critical to have reliable and comprehensive data on all aspects of transportation, including bicycling and walking. We call on Congress to:

- Provide funding to support more regular collection of the National Household Transportation Survey, including state and regional data, and to continue the American Community Survey.
- Improve data collection at all levels for bicycle and pedestrian mode share, crash rate, injuries and crash causes.
- Provide adequate funding for the Safe Routes to School, Transportation Alternatives and Pedestrian/Bicycle Information clearinghouses, which support data collection on bicycle and pedestrian projects and their impacts.
- Support investments in alternative modeling tools that better capture bicycle and pedestrian movements.

Ensure that Our Transportation System is Healthy and Equitable

In addition to the above key areas of focus, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership supports several transportation planning principles that are being led by partners. We will collaborate with partners to support the following principles:

- Ensure that all transportation funding streams instill equity in how transportation funds and projects are decided and distributed to ensure that low-income communities have access to needed safe transportation options and are not disproportionately impacted by emissions and crashes.
- Require complete streets policies at the federal, state and regional levels so that our transportation system is built right, for all users—including bicyclists and pedestrians, from the start.
- Build in more local control and sub-allocation to all transportation funding streams so that those transportation leaders closest to their constituents are better able to plan and program for needed transportation improvements.
- Incentivize the consideration of public health in transportation planning, encompassing the safety, physical activity and air quality aspects of transportation projects.