



For Immediate Release
Thursday, March 4, 2004

For More Information:
Barbara McCann
(202) 641-1163
Paul Brovak
(212) 714-1280

Fair Share for Safety

Bicycling, walking, health groups call for changes in federal transportation bills

Washington, March 4 -- Bicycling, walking, and public health advocates today called on Congress to make sure that a fair share of federal transportation safety dollars go to safer bicycling and walking. The advocates said the federal transportation bill now working its way through the House includes an exciting new Safe Routes to School program, but does not do enough to create a complete street network for safe walking and bicycling.

“Pedestrians and bicyclists are 13 percent of all traffic fatalities, yet less than two percent of federal safety funds now go to protect people on foot or bicycle,” said Martha Roskowski, Campaign Manager of America Bikes, a coalition of eight national bicycling groups. “In many states, the Department of Transportation has spent none of its safety funds on this critical safety problem. We’d like to see the final transportation bill include a fair share for bicycle and pedestrian safety.”

America Bikes used federal spending data to determine that twenty-two states have spent no safety money on bicycling and walking, even though up to 28 percent of their traffic fatalities are people on foot or bicycle. A state by state chart is posted at www.americabikes.org.

“Interstate highways and high speed urban arterials with few or dangerous pedestrian crossings have created barriers within our communities,” noted Sally Flocks, Vice President of the advocacy group America Walks. “The transportation bill should allocate safety funds toward creating safer crossings.”

Bicycling, walking, and health advocates are pleased that Congress has included a new Safe Routes to School program to both the House and Senate versions of the bill. The House version would provide \$250 million per year to help the states make it safer for children to walk and bicycle to school.

“Safe Routes to School will help fight childhood obesity, a leading risk factor for cardiovascular disease,” said Brian Williams, Government Relations manager at the American Heart Association. “And we need to do even more. If the transportation system does not include sidewalks, bike paths, and other modes of non-vehicular travel, it creates a significant barrier to the promotion of physical activity.”

In addition to working for Safe Routes to School and increased safety funding, America Bikes wants a “complete streets” provision in the final transportation law which would direct states to build most roads as complete transportation corridors that are efficient, safe and comfortable for driving, bicycling, and walking.

More than 350 bicycle advocates, manufacturers and bike shop owners are on Capitol Hill today, educating their representatives on the health benefits of bicycling while urging them to support bike-friendly provisions in the final transportation bill.

“The diverse group in Washington this week represents the broad coalition that showed its power last September, when it successfully pushed back an attempt by the House leadership last summer to eliminate the popular Transportation Enhancements program.” said Patrick McCormick of the League of American Bicyclists. Bicycle advocates from 47 states are in Washington, DC for the National Bike Summit, sponsored by the League and the industry group Bikes Belong.

For more information on what is in the federal transportation law for people on foot and bicycle, visit www.americabikes.org, or call Barbara McCann at (202) 641-1163.

#