

Explore Ways to Promote Active Transportation in the Upcoming Federal Transportation Reauthorization

The American Heart Association's Position

- The American Heart Association prioritizes increasing physical activity across the U.S. population as an important opportunity to improve cardiovascular health and decrease the likelihood of chronic disease.
- Promoting active transportation is a leading evidence-based strategy to increase physical activity across the lifespan, reducing risk factors for cardiovascular disease and diabetes and lower body mass index (BMI). Active transportation also generates economic gains (medical cost savings, job creation, improved workforce productivity, etc.), reduces traffic congestion and improves air quality.^{1,2,3}
- The American Heart Association supports safe and equitable active transportation policy in all communities. These policies should incorporate consistent implementation evaluation and prioritize equity, and should include Complete Streets policies, Safe Routes to School, biking and pedestrian infrastructure projects, and funding for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program. Funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) should be increased which includes Safe Routes to School and walking and biking infrastructure funding.
- Performance measures should be implemented that rate pedestrian and bicycle lane safety and quality levels to identify communities needing attention and funding.

Fast Facts:

1. Nearly 80% of U.S. adults and 75% of adolescents fail to meet the weekly threshold of muscle-strengthening and aerobic activities recommended by the Physical Activity Guidelines, and rates of active travel among U.S. school children have declined by 35% over 40 years^{3,4}
2. A population's physical activity levels are a function of its built environment. A 2015 study found that a 5% increase in community walkability resulted in a 32.1% increase in time spent on active travel and a 0.23 point decrease in BMI per person.^{1,2}
3. A 2010 analysis revealed that the U.S. spends \$5.9 billion each year on direct medical costs for fatalities and injuries suffered by pedestrians and cyclists - an amount seven times greater than the investment required to build safer walking and biking infrastructure that can avert these losses³
4. Despite declining rates of active travel among children and robust benefits, only about 2% of the federal aid highway program funds are dedicated to TAP projects and almost 50% of the applicants to the program remained unfunded in 2017⁵

Results from Cost-Effectiveness Studies

	Safe Routes to School (SRTS)	Complete Streets	
	A \$10 million SRTS investment across 124 schools in New York City (2016) resulted in fewer injuries to adults and children along with medical cost savings of \$240 million over 50 years ³	Complete Streets is associated with higher rates of walking, better air quality, and fewer injuries, thus saving \$18.1 million in medical costs per year across the country ¹	
The AHA Impact	Supported 41 successful appropriations campaigns supporting SRTS, and bike/ped infrastructure in numerous cities, counties, and states.	These campaigns have covered over 106 million residents	Active ongoing support for robust federal transportation reauthorization that supports active transportation.

For more information and resources from the American Heart Association's policy research department on physical education in schools please visit: <https://www.heart.org/en/about-us/policy-research>.

1. Active Transportation Policy Statement. July 2017. American Heart Association.
2. Litman, T. (2018, August). Evaluating Active Transport Benefits and Costs - vtpi.org. Retrieved October/November, 2018, from <http://www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf>
3. Pedrosa, M. (2017, December). Investing in Walking, Biking, And Safe Routes to School. Retrieved October/November, 2018, from https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/121117-sr2s-investing_report-final.pdf
4. Benjamin et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics - 2018 update: A report from the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2018; 137(12):e67-e492, doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000558
5. Brooks. (2018, September). Federal Investments in Active Transportation Fall Far Short of Growing Demand, Hampering States' Ability to Build Connected Infrastructure. Retrieved October/November, 2018, from <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/federal-investments-in-active-transportation-fall-far-short-of-growing-demand-hampering-states-ability-to-build-connected-infrastructure>

*Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets, League of American Bicyclists