



May 12, 2017

Chair Beyer and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization,

I'm writing on behalf of the 4J School District in Eugene in support of HB3230, the Safe Routes to School bill, with the specific request that the policy language from HB3230 be included in the Transportation package.

In the last three weeks, two 4J students have been injured walking and biking to and from school. In the first incident, a 5th grader I'll call Andrew stepped out into the marked crosswalk in front of his school and was knocked to the ground by a car travelling approximately 25 miles an hour. This happened on a street where the speed limit is 30 mph, but where cars often travel 35 or even 40 mph. It was only due to the worst of good luck, rather than a protective road design, that the car was not travelling much faster, which would likely have resulted in Andrew's death rather than the concussion that he was diagnosed with before leaving the hospital.

This is just one near miss that makes clear the need for infrastructure improvements within the mile surrounding schools, the "walk zone" within which students are generally not bused to school. Our transportation system must be improved to ensure that vulnerable road users are not interacting with vehicle traffic at speeds likely to result in fatalities and life-altering injury. An added benefit of increasing safety within a mile of schools is that the expenditures can lead to savings in busing; when streets are deemed a "hazard," the district and the state pay for supplemental busing within the walk zone. At Andrew's school, due in part to the traffic volume and vehicle speed on the street where he was hit, students are bused from the neighborhood across the street from the school. Given the desperate state of school funding, it's clear that there are many other ways we could spend that money if the hazard could be improved and supplemental busing eliminated.

Andrew's school also happens to be a Title 1 school, and as with many of the other Title 1 schools within Eugene's city limits and nationwide, does not have comparable bicycle and pedestrian facilities to schools located in wealthier neighborhoods. Our Safe Routes to School program is working to prioritize improvements made in underserved areas, for which an easy identifier is the status on Title 1 funding for the school. We would like to see the Safe Routes legislative language give priority for Title 1 schools.

Finally, Andrew's story points to another need: that of programmatic funding for Safe Routes to School. Currently, only approximately 35% of 4J students participate in our Pedestrian Safety or Bike Safety classes, in large part because of insufficient funding for the Safe Routes to School program that pays for these classes. Andrew stepped into the

crosswalk after hitting the button to activate flashing lights, but without waiting to see that traffic had stopped. There was no crossing guard at the crosswalk to make him pause. I share these facts not to blame Andrew for the crash, but to highlight the need for an expansion of our educational offerings and coordination of crossing guards in order to protect student lives.

Aside from the crucial need to keep our students safe as they walk, bike and skate to school, 4J is motivated to encourage active transportation for the health benefits and life skills it brings our students. We are battling a fierce obesity epidemic, and active transportation is one way we can win. Students that can use our road system safely can have greater independence and ability to get to school on time, particularly as they grow old enough to get to school on their own. However, without the infrastructure to support active transportation to school, and without the skills and encouragement to use active transportation, we can't expect our families to make the choice to change their habits.

Again, we respectfully ask that the policy language from HB3230 be inserted into the Transportation Package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Mazze".

Sarah Mazze
Safe Routes to School Program Manager
Transportation Department
Eugene 4J School District
(541) 790 7492
Mazze_s@4j.lane.edu