



To: House Committee on Transportation

From: Kari Schlosshauer, Pacific Northwest Regional Policy Manager, Safe Routes National Partnership

Date: June 6, 2017

Written Testimony for HB 2017

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization:

We are pleased to see the Oregon Legislature dedicate funding in HB 2017 to ensure more youth in Oregon can safely walk and roll to school. This is a step in the right direction for the hundreds of thousands of students in Oregon who currently live within their school's one-mile walk zone but do not have a safe route to their school, nor a program to support and encourage their safe and active school transportation. Thank you.

We are, however, disappointed to see the Safe Routes to School language in HB 2017 is significantly weaker than that of HB 3230, which already passed out of the House Committee on Transportation earlier this session. We are gravely concerned that, as the bill is currently written, after 10 years only a fraction of schools in the state will have received any safety benefits, those schools that need it most won't be able to afford it, and those that do will only see partial benefit. On behalf of Safe Routes to School National Partnership's Pacific Northwest Network, we respectfully ask for, at a minimum, substitution of HB 3230 language into HB 2017 Section 123. Specifically:

1. The students who need a safe route the most, of course, are those who have no option but to already walk to school in unsafe conditions. At low-income Title I schools, many caregivers do not have a flexible schedule or cannot afford to drive their children to school: these kids are already walking. Requiring a 40% match for projects around low-income schools may all but eliminate these schools from the process to be in line for safety upgrades. Not all cities or towns have policies in place that prioritize those low-income schools, and the need to provide safe routes for youth who need them most is more important than proving local jurisdictions have "skin in the game".

Our recommendation: Waive the match requirement for Title I schools.

HB 3230: establish a methodology for distributing a proportionate share of moneys received under section 1 of this 2017 Act to school applicants that are considered high poverty under Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

2. In Oregon, school walk zones are one mile for elementary and 1.5 miles for middle school students. Barring extremely hazardous situations, these students are ineligible for yellow bus service and are expected to get to and from school on their own or with the support of their family — this is an immense burden for most working families. It's important to also note that students live throughout the walk zone, so to only allow these funds to be spent within a quarter-mile of a school is to ignore serious safety needs and barriers for students traveling from further away.



Our recommendation: Allow improvements to be made on priority walking routes within a mile of a school (1.5 miles of middle schools). The applicable plan developed pursuant to ORS 195.115, also known as a [School Action Plan](#), is robust and sufficient to determine these primary walking routes.

HB 3230: prioritize the expenditure of funds as authorized under this section for safe routes to schools infrastructure projects that are located within a one-mile radius of a school that is considered high poverty under Title I.

3. We have let the travel safety of our kids slip to the bottom of the prioritization list for so long that the rate of walking and bicycling to school has [more than halved](#) in the past 50 years. It is essential to include supportive pedestrian and bicycle safety education and encouragement, which is a form of transportation demand management (TDM) for school populations. The pairing of infrastructure and programmatic support is shown to result in a [43 percent increase](#) in walking and bicycling rates over five years.

Our recommendation: Recognizing the extreme financial constraints put on the state's General Fund, including those to fund basic education, we recommend the Oregon Department of Transportation increase funding for Safe Routes to School programming at the state level by looking to existing eligible federal Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funds for Safe Routes to School program support. This programmatic support funding should be directly tied to past and current infrastructure improvements around schools.

HB 3230: out of the General Fund, the amount of \$12 million, to be deposited in the Safe Routes to Schools Fund.

4. Finally, given the size of this package, the importance of our next generation, and where we want and need to move our state to reach its [climate emission reduction and related vehicle miles traveled goals](#) (PDF), it is heartbreaking to see only \$10 million per year for the hundreds of thousands of youth in more than 1,200 public and charter schools and 197 school districts in the state; worse, that the dedication would end after only 10 years. The need is so much greater, and so should be our state's commitment to our children and our future. The funding for this essential work should not end in 10 years, as currently written in HB 2017.

Our recommendation: Increase funding available for infrastructure improvements around schools, add funding for non-infrastructure programmatic support, and remove the 10-year sunset.

HB 3230: In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropriated to the Department of Transportation, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2017, ... the amount of \$12 million, to be deposited in the Safe Routes to Schools Fund established under ORS 184.740. ... At least \$20 million shall be expended for the planning, design and construction of safe routes to schools infrastructure projects that will reduce barriers and hazards to children walking or bicycling to and from school.



The Safe Routes to School National Partnership works to advance safe travel to and from schools and to foster the creation of healthy communities for everyone. Increased transportation mobility for Oregon youth provides access not only to school, but also to other essential needs in the community for people of all ages and abilities. Providing these essential life skills at a young age helps ensure the benefits and value of healthy travel options for our youth, and promoting walking and bicycling within a mile of schools improves air quality and livability of our neighborhoods while increasing everyone's wellbeing.

The rate of walking and bicycling to school has more than halved in the past 50 years, but that trend is reversible with the commitment and investment to achieving the change we want to see. Safe Routes to School initiatives work hard for their dollar: By making streets safe around schools, we generally see walking and biking increase by 18% and when we add education and encouragement programs, that increases up to [43% increase](#) in walking and rolling amongst students. At a time when vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is increasing, along with fatality and obesity rates in Oregon, your meaningful support of our youth and our future will make all the difference.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Schlosshauer'.

Kari Schlosshauer
Pacific Northwest Regional Policy Manager, Safe Routes National Partnership