



To: The Joint Transportation Committee on Preservation and Modernization

From: Christina Bodamer, Oregon Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

Re: House Bill 2017 -3

Date: June 6, 2017

Look both ways. When we cross the street with children, these words come from our mouths almost automatically. Protecting children—teaching them how to live a long life—is so natural; we barely have to think about it. In the same way, teaching the children of our community how to live healthfully should be just as natural to us. Safety and healthy living should go hand in hand.

Walking or biking to school is one of the best ways for children to practice safety while learning to build physical activity into their everyday lives. But kids walking to school today have a different set of challenges. We tell our kids to look both ways before crossing the street, but with more traffic, missing sidewalks, unsafe crosswalks, and no bike lanes, it's hard to keep kids safe. Access to safe routes encourages children and their families to stay active, lead healthy lives and helps prevent health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

For the first time in decades, children today are being born with a shorter life expectancy than their parents. In the face of a childhood obesity rate that has tripled in the last 4 decades while physical activity has declined, it's time to look for solutions. Given the ongoing challenges of curtailing the childhood obesity epidemic, the American Heart Association is focused on finding opportunities to create healthier, more active communities where the healthy choice (to walk or bike) can be an easy, safe choice.

Since 1969, the US has seen a decline from nearly 50% of students regularly walking to school to only 13% in 2009 even though we knew that when kids walk a mile to and from school, they are meeting 2/3 of the recommended amount of daily exercise. Nearly 65% of adolescents do not currently get the recommended amount of physical activity each day. Individuals with sedentary lifestyles have increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and other chronic diseases, like diabetes.

In addition to infrastructure, programmatic support for Safe Routes to School will help teach safety: These important lessons in walking and bicycling safety are taught at a

young age and complement street-scale improvements, helping to prevent and reduce injuries.

The American Heart Association applauds this committees work to include infrastructure improvement for Safe Routes to School in the transportation package, but more work is needed to ensure that investment is helping those that need it most. We encourage the committee to consider the following amendments to the Safe Routes to School language:

- Funding in-classroom education with \$6M per year
- Including Title 1 prioritization for street safety projects
- Creating flexibility in local funding match requirement for Title 1 schools
- Expanding the radius for eligible projects around schools to 1 mile, as generally students are not bussed within a one mile radius so limiting it to $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile is not adequate.