

June 6, 2017



Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair  
Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair  
Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown, and Members of the Committee:

Children First for Oregon (CFFO) is the primary source for data on the wellbeing of Oregon's 860,000 kids. Our program, United for Kids, works with partners like the Street Trust, to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. We collaborate with stakeholders from across the state to advance policies and programs that protect and promote the economic security, education, health and safety of all children in Oregon.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) infrastructure projects and educational programming are important to CFFO and to children and families across the state. As of 2012, nearly 50 percent of Oregon's kids were not exercising regularly.<sup>1</sup> Access to a safe route to school and knowledge of how to comfortably make an active transportation a norm in a student's life can help increase student recreation. A higher rate of walking and biking made possible through SRTS can also have a positive impact on the 17 percent of Oregon children who are not in excellent or very good health.<sup>2</sup>

Safe Routes to School and CFFO recognize that a short walk to school can have substantial long-term physical, psychological, and social benefits for all of Oregon's children. Analysis of traffic incidents confirms that walking is the safest way to the classroom, especially in rural areas.<sup>3,4</sup> Studies also attest to the dramatic mental benefits of an active commute; even a 20-minute walk can reduce rates of depression in children.<sup>5</sup> And, as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control, Safe Routes to School programming can also enhance the transportation safety knowledge of a community surrounding a SRTS school.<sup>6</sup>

With sidewalks and measures to increase safety maintained and made possible by Safe Routes to School, kids in urban and rural communities can tap into all of the benefits of making a commute to school a time for exercise and community building. Thank you for your support of Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

Tonia Hunt  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Kids Count Data Center, available at: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#OR/2/0/char/0>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Valerie Iancovich, "Why walking to school is better than driving for your kids," University of Toronto, 2015, available at: <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/why-walking-school-better-driving-your-kids>

<sup>4</sup> FHWA, Highway Safety Information System, Factors Contributing to Pedestrian and Bicycle Crashes on Rural Highways, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/10052/10052.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Iancovich.

<sup>6</sup> "What is Safe Routes to School," CDC, available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/saferoutes/>