

## POLICY AT A GLANCE:

# Active Transportation in the Federal Transportation Reauthorization



Since 2011, the American Heart Association has supported or led campaigns promoting Active Transportation in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization

- The Association prioritizes active transportation as an important evidence-based strategy to increase physical activity across the lifespan, to improve cardiovascular disease, and decrease the likelihood of chronic disease.<sup>i ii</sup>
- Active transportation also generates economic gains (medical cost savings, job creation, improved workforce productivity), reduces traffic congestion and improves air quality.<sup>iii iv v vi</sup>
- The Association supports safe and accessible active transportation policy in all communities. These policies should incorporate consistent implementation evaluation and prioritize access for all, 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.
- Performance measures should be implemented that rate pedestrian and bicycle lane safety and quality levels to identify communities needing attention and funding.

**The American Heart Association actively supports a federal surface transportation reauthorization that support active transportation including:**

- Policies that support Complete Streets such as allowing states to set aside a portion of their federal highway funding to create a grant program that will fund “complete streets” projects. Through this program, eligible local and regional entities will be able to apply for technical assistance and capital funding to build safe streets projects - such as sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and bus stops - using evidence-based, context-sensitive guidance, and design guidelines of roadways.
- Ensures that Active Transportation is safe by encouraging state and local governments to fully leverage federal funding for complete protected bike lanes and pedestrian networks and help fill a critical gap in the current process for these projects.
- Requires transparency and timeliness for safety data and provides additional support to states failing to meet positive safety targets.
- Maintaining the Vulnerable Road User Safety Rule to comply more closely with the Vulnerable Road User Assessment.

## Fast Facts

- 1** Active transportation is any self-propelled, human-powered mode of leisure (recreational) or utilitarian transportation - such as walking, biking, skating, using mobility assistive devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, and accessing public transit.<sup>vii</sup>
- 2** More than 75% of U.S. adults and about 75% of 6–17-year-olds fail to meet the weekly threshold of muscle-strengthening and aerobic activities recommended by the Physical Activity Guidelines, and only 10% of school-aged children walk or bike to school.<sup>viii, ix, x</sup>
- 3** There has been an historic increase in pedestrian deaths since 2010. In 2022, 7522 people were killed while walking because of inadequate safe infrastructure, a 40-year high.<sup>xi</sup>
- 4** A 2019 study revealed that pedestrian and cyclist crashes (fatal and nonfatal) accounted for approximately \$23.2 billion in medical expenses, lost productivity, and other related costs.<sup>xii</sup>
- 5** Despite the increase in overall apportionment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the available Transportation Alternative (TA) funds are not keeping up with the demand. Demand continues to outpace availability roughly 2 to 1.<sup>xiii</sup>

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- Expands the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) competitive grant program that was established in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). These grants can be used to great a comprehensive safety action plan as well as provide funding to implement projects and infrastructure that is compliant with that action plan.
- Requires that every state has a Safe Routes to School Coordinator.
- Instructs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to update their bike education curriculum for primary and secondary school students and to disseminate the curriculum. It should also be made clear that this is eligible for Highway Safety Grants.

For more information and resources from the American Heart Association's policy research department, please visit [www.heart.org/policyresearch](http://www.heart.org/policyresearch)

## References

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- <sup>vii</sup> CDC. (2024, November 4). Community Design Definitions. Physical Activity. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/community-design-definitions/index.html>
- <sup>viii</sup> Elgaddal, N., Kramarow, E., & Reuben, C. (2022). Physical Activity Among Adults Aged 18 and Over: United States, 2020 Key findings Data from the National Health Interview Survey. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db443.pdf>
- <sup>ix</sup> CDC. (2024). Data & Statistics for Physical Activity. Physical Activity. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/data/index.html>
- <sup>x</sup> US Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. (n.d.). PAA. <https://paamovewithus.org/us-report-card-on-physical-activity-for-children-and-youth/>

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<sup>xi</sup> Smart Growth America. (2024). Dangerous by Design 2024. Smart Growth America; Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

<sup>xii</sup> Blincoe, L., Miller, T., Wang, J.-S., Swedler, D., Coughlin, T., Lawrence, B., Guo, F., Klauer, S., & Dingus, T. (2023, February). The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2019 (Revised) (Report No. DOT HS 813 403). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>xiii</sup> Chesser, Kim. (2024, September 25). Analysis of Transportation Alternatives Finds Progress and Demand - Rails to Trails Conservancy. Rails to Trails Conservancy. <https://www.railstotrails.org/trailblog/2024/september/25/analysis-of-nations-largest-funding-source-for-active-transportation-finds-progress-amidst-overwhelming-demand/>