

Action for Healthy Kids \* Adventure Cycling \* Alliance for Biking & Walking \* America Bikes \* America Walks \* American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance \* American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network \* American Council on Exercise \* American Cultural Resources Association \* American Heart Association \* American Planning Association \* American Public Health Association \* American Society of Landscape Architects \* Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals \* Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) \* Bikes Belong Coalition \* Developing Communities Project (DCP) \* Directors of Health Promotion and Education \* Earth Day Network \* Gamaliel \* Institute for Transportation & Development Policy \* League of American Bicyclists \* Local Government Commission \* National Association for Sport and Physical Education \* National Association of Chronic Disease Directors \* National Association of City Transportation Officials \* National Association of County and City Health Officials \* National Center for Bicycling and Walking \* National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity \* National Complete Streets Coalition \* National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers \* National Recreation and Park Association \* National Trust for Historic Preservation \* National Wildlife Federation \* Natural Resources Defense Council \* PolicyLink \* Preservation Action \* Rails-to-Trails Conservancy \* Ryan Snyder Associates \* Safe Kids Worldwide \* Safe Routes to School National Partnership \* Safe States Alliance \* Sierra Club \* Smart Growth America \* Society for Historical Archaeology \* Transportation Equity Network \* Transportation for America \* Trust for America's Health \* Ubuntu Green \* YMCA of the USA

September 21, 2012

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As you move forward on issuing guidance on the Transportation Alternatives program for the new transportation bill, MAP-21, the undersigned national organizations respectfully urge you to include a number of provisions that will help ensure this program is implemented in an efficient and effective way.

Our organizations care about a diverse range of issues—transportation, safety, accessibility, economic competitiveness, historic preservation, health, equity, environment and obesity. And we are united in asking you to ensure that Transportation Alternatives provides local governments full and timely access to these federal transportation funds for projects previously funded through Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School and the Recreational Trails Program. This will help ensure that local communities have access to funds and give locally elected leaders—who know the transportation and economic revitalization needs of their communities best—more direct control over decisions on smaller-scale local transportation projects that connect people to their daily needs and make cities and towns economically competitive and safe for families and pedestrians of all ages.

We have several recommendations on Transportation Alternatives that we hope you will incorporate into the guidance:

1. **Ensure timely implementation by the state departments of transportation.** The Transportation Alternatives language was carefully crafted to give local governments a chance to compete for these dollars. It is important to ensure that states carry out a “good faith effort” to make their Transportation Alternatives funds available. This can be done

through providing best practices and recommendations on application deadlines, process and timely obligation.

2. **Provide Metropolitan Planning Organizations with a model grant process.** Many MPOs will be new to running a competitive grant process and it would be helpful to provide them with best practice recommendations on application guidelines, decision-making criteria, engaging underrepresented and/or socially-disadvantaged populations, makeup of diverse decision-making committees, and how to manage projects to ensure quick completion.
3. **Utilize FHWA resources to collect and disseminate much-needed data on bicycling and walking.** The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center should be retained to allow their technical assistance and data-collection efforts to continue, and the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse should be expanded to track Transportation Alternatives implementation and funded projects by states and MPOs. We also encourage FHWA to assess the impact of these projects on safety, health and access across demographics.
4. **Clarify the new eligibilities under Transportation Alternatives.** The new eligibility regarding conversion of underused highways to boulevards should define boulevards as utilizing multi-modal Complete Streets approaches, inclusive of elements for pedestrians and bicyclists, to ensure it fits within the focus of the Transportation Alternatives program. And as the new “safe routes for non-drivers” eligible use references the creation of projects and systems, we would like to see language that allows education and safety programming related to infrastructure, which is often key to a comprehensive approach to improve safety for these users. We recommend that both uses be focused on creating networks for non-motorized travel by building new accessibility or filling gaps in an existing network.
5. **Retain critical aspects of the Safe Routes to School program.** The Safe Routes to School coordinators have expertise necessary for the implementation of Transportation Alternatives, and their salaries should be eligible to be paid from the Transportation Alternatives funding, as it currently is within the Safe Routes to School program. In addition, please retain current law, as referenced in MAP-21, for the 100% federal funding with no local match required. This has been essential in ensuring that low-income communities and small towns that lack the financial resources to put up a match are able to make their communities safe for children.

Thank you very much for considering our recommendations for Transportation Alternatives guidance. We greatly appreciate the Administration’s leadership on walking, bicycling and livable communities. With thoughtful guidance, the Administration can help ensure that locally-driven transportation improvements contributing to healthy, safe and environmentally-friendly communities are built across the country. These types of investments make communities attractive for private sector investments and more attractive for businesses while improving safety for everyone.

Sincerely,

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Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)  
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Developing Communities Project (DCP)  
Directors of Health Promotion and Education  
Earth Day Network  
Gamaliel  
Institute for Transportation & Development Policy  
League of American Bicyclists  
Local Government Commission  
National Association for Sport and Physical Education  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Association of City Transportation Officials  
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National Center for Bicycling and Walking  
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity  
National Complete Streets Coalition  
National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers  
National Recreation and Park Association  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
PolicyLink  
Preservation Action  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Ryan Snyder Associates  
Safe Kids Worldwide  
Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
Safe States Alliance  
Sierra Club  
Smart Growth America  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
Transportation Equity Network  
Transportation for America  
Trust for America's Health  
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