

Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Transportation Committee Public Hearing
June 3, 2010

Presented by Josh Karns
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Good Afternoon. My name is Josh Karns, and I am the Executive Director of Pennsylvania Walks and Bikes.

First, I'd like to thank you for providing me with the opportunity to be a part of this very important and timely civic discussion.

Pennsylvania Walks and Bikes is committed to developing policies and actions that will enable the safe access to pedestrian and bicycling opportunities across the state. We strive to create a complete transportation system that integrates all modes; one which ensures that Pennsylvanians can safely travel: on foot, by bicycle, by public transit, and in a car.

As you consider the challenging landscape of transportation funding, I'm here to remind you of the important role of walking and biking in both Pennsylvania's transportation system and the daily lives of many of our citizens.

We estimate that 4% of Pennsylvanians walk or bike to work, and 12% of all trips in the state are done by foot or bicycle. These statistics are unsurprising when one considers that a quarter of all trips are within a mile of the home. Yet, Pennsylvania spends less than 2% of its transportation dollars on bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

It would be easy to spend my testimony talking about the statistics, but I won't. If you are interested in data, I will help you find it. What I would like to talk about is a picture that emerges from these numbers.

Millions of Pennsylvanians from all backgrounds walk or bike as part of their regular transportation, and the walkers and bikers among us are disproportionately the more vulnerable members of society: our children, the elderly, and the poor. In many cases, these folks do not have access to an automobile.

Despite the need, pedestrian and cycling projects are too often thought of as an add on to the transportation system, and they have been the first to get cut when it is time to tighten our belts.

One way to build our bike and pedestrian infrastructure is to strategically and expediently spend the funding that is already available for these projects. The recent extension of SAFETEA-LU, the federal transportation act, ensured funding through December 2010 and restored rescissions enacted in 2009. Included in this was funding

dedicated to Pennsylvania for Safe Routes to School projects. While many states have moved ahead with a call for applications, PennDOT has indicated that they do not plan to allocate Pennsylvania's Safe Routes to School money at this time. This is despite the demonstrated need and the past success of these projects in the state. We advocate that part of the solution to Pennsylvania's transportation problem must start with the funds that are available today.

I personally have been commuting by foot everyday for five years and counting. I have experienced the the brutal heat of August, the snow piles of February, and the pleasant days in between. Along the road, I have witnessed the danger of inadequate sidewalks and deteriorating pedestrian bridges. At times, I've been afraid while stepping rightfully into a crosswalk on a busy street.

As you proceed with your deliberations, I urge you to consider bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as a cost-effective part of the system. Regardless of the final funding approach, do not sacrifice walking and biking to the preference of other transportation modes. Pennsylvania needs a complete transportation system.

I hope these comments can help guide your conversation, and I am happy to provide further information or assistance as you move forward.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity.