

America Walks • American Heart Association • American Planning Association • American Public Health Association • American Society of Landscape Architects Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals • Association of State Public Health Nutritionists • Healthy Schools Campaign • League of American Bicyclists • National Association of Chronic Disease Directors • National Recreation and Park Association • People for Bikes • Rails to Trails Conservancy • Safe Kids Worldwide • Safe Routes Partnership • Safe States Alliance • Sierra Club • The Trust for Public Land • Transportation for America • Trust for America's Health • YMCA of the USA

March 29, 2021

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
United States Senate
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin and Senator Wicker:

Thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 614, A bill to amend title 23, United States Code, to improve the transportation alternatives program, and for other purposes. The undersigned national organizations are pleased to support this bill and applaud your leadership on this issue. Our organizations work with federal, state, and local governments; public and private professionals; and advocates in the transportation, health, environment, and equity sectors to provide safe and accessible transportation options for people, which increases opportunities for physical activity and reduces traffic congestion and air pollution in our communities.

The Transportation Alternatives Program has been a key source of funding for communities all across the country to make it easier and safer for people to walk and bike to the places they need and want to go: for kids to get to and from school, for people to access transit stops, grocery stores, and parks. Making walking and bicycling more convenient helps get people out of their cars and using travel modes that are better for their bodies and for our planet. The Transportation Alternatives Program has helped local communities to create vital connections to employment, education, and opportunity in nearly every congressional district across the country.

Yet the positive impacts of this program have not been fully realized. Since 2013, states have transferred more than \$1 billion out of TAP, including a few states that regularly transfer the maximum 50 percent without even running a competition and making funds available to local communities. The Transportation Alternatives Enhancement Act would prevent states from transferring up to 50% out of TAP into other transportation projects unless they can demonstrate that they held a competition, provided technical assistance to potential applicants, and that there were not enough suitable applicants to use the funding. Importantly, it would require the consideration of impact on high-need communities as part of the project selection process, prioritizing projects in neighborhoods and communities that are low-income, rural, transit-dependent, or have other indicators of high need.

For some communities, particularly smaller and less resourced communities, these federal funds have historically been difficult to access. S. 614 makes key improvements to the program that would create better access to these funds, including giving states more flexibility on the required local match and letting states use up to 5% of funding to support staff and technical assistance, strategies that have improved access to these funds when employed at the state level.

Research shows that building supportive street features for walking and bicycling has positive impacts on health, air quality, and local economies. S. 614 would provide more funding to communities to reap those benefits by building essential infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and grow the next generation of safe, active people through education and encouragement as part of Safe Routes to School programs.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in supporting the growth and improvement of the Transportation Alternatives Program that creates opportunities for physical activity, access to jobs and services, and reduces traffic congestion and air pollution through making it easier, safer, and more convenient for people to walk and roll throughout their communities.

Sincerely,

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