

September 26, 2012

The Honorable James S. Simpson  
Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Transportation  
1035 Parkway Avenue  
P.O. Box 601  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0600

**Re: New Jersey Implementation of Transportation Alternatives, Recreational Trails and Safe Routes to School Programs under MAP-21**

Dear Commissioner Simpson,

We, the undersigned organizations, are pleased to have the opportunity to provide you with this letter for your consideration of how the New Jersey Department of Transportation will implement the new federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21). We are fortunate that MAP-21 has tremendous flexibility. Under this framework, New Jersey can choose to continue its commitment to pedestrian and bicycle programs, Recreational Trails and Safe Routes to School.

**Background**

Walking and bicycling are popular and economically beneficial modes of transportation throughout New Jersey. Under the leadership of the Department of Transportation, New Jersey is a nationally recognized leader for award-winning Safe Routes to Schools programs, has consistently ranked in the top 10 of "Bicycle Friendly States" by the League of American Bicyclists, and the state's Complete Streets policy, which you have promoted successfully throughout the state, encouraging adoption by local municipalities, was ranked as the strongest in the nation by the National Complete Streets Coalition in 2011.

According to a 2011 Monmouth University poll, nearly three in four New Jersey residents agree that economic growth is promoted in communities where a variety of transportation options exist and where neighborhoods are within walking distance of shopping and other services. Moreover, funding requests by municipalities for bicycle and pedestrian projects always far exceed the funding available – testament to the ever-growing demand and vision of New Jersey communities to improve the built environment to better serve the economy, the community and the environment. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's 2011 State Strategic Plan exemplifies the state's commitment to national leadership by creating sustainable and healthy communities that attract and provide strong economic opportunities.

In fiscal year 2012, under the prior transportation act SAFETEA-LU, New Jersey received approximately \$25 million for bike and pedestrian projects; this amount, which represented only 2.8% of the state's total transportation allocation, funded the following categories:

- Recreational Trails: \$1.1 million
- Safe Routes to Schools: \$4.7 million
- Transportation Enhancements: \$19 million

Under SAFETEA-LU, bicycle and pedestrian funding was already a small percentage of total transportation dollars: 2.8% of the total federal dollars programmed, while these modes represent 12% of trips nationally and 26% of road fatalities in the state. The New Jersey traffic fatality figure for walking and bicycling is twice the national average and ranks New Jersey as the second worst state for safety in the nation according to the Alliance for Biking & Walking 2012 Benchmarking Report. If New Jersey is to reduce the fatality rate, municipalities need dedicated funds for pedestrian, bicycle and Safe Routes to School projects to make critical safety improvements to their transportation networks.

### **MAP-21**

For fiscal years 2013 and 2014, funding for bicycling and walking projects underwent significant changes with the passage of MAP-21. MAP-21 consolidated bicycling and walking programs into a new program called Transportation Alternatives and added additional eligible uses.

In New Jersey, through MAP-21, transportation projects (Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration combined) will receive approximately \$1.5 billion/year. The full effects of MAP-21 will vary from state to state. Fortunately, states have tremendous flexibility in how they implement MAP-21, and Transportation Alternatives is not the only source of money available for pedestrian and bicycle projects under the new law – the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) are also potential sources of funding to advance pedestrian and bicycle safety.

### **Request**

Due to the flexibility in MAP-21, and the important benefits of pedestrian and bicycle programs, we urge the New Jersey Department of Transportation to retain its commitment to bicycling and walking as it implements MAP-21. This will ensure continued multi-modal improvements to our transportation network that serve the economic, social, and environmental needs of our state, thereby creating sustainable and healthy communities that attract and provide strong economic development opportunities.

We, the undersigned, respectfully recommend the following principles for New Jersey Department of Transportation's implementation of the federal transportation law:

1. Preserve the state's commitment to using federal funds to invest in pedestrian and bicycle modes and fully fund all bicycle and pedestrian programs with federal dollars eligible under the Transportation Alternatives designation, keeping pedestrian and bicycle project funding level

with FY2012 dollars, which is \$25 million/year. Use STP, CMAQ and/or HSIP funds to cover the shortfall.

2. Continue to support the bicycle and pedestrian programs from SAFETEA-LU through the implementation of MAP-21 by retaining the existing grant processes for Recreational Trails, Transportation Alternatives (the prior Transportation Enhancements program) and Safe Routes to School.
  - a. Retain the state role in programming pedestrian and bicycle programs with fully maximized funding, using all of the state's share of Transportation Alternatives for those eligible projects.
  - b. Fully fund the Recreational Trails program off the top of Transportation Alternatives utilizing all funds designated for Recreational Trails.
  - c. Preserve or increase staff support for Transportation Alternatives by maintaining state Safe Routes to Schools coordinators and bike/pedestrian coordinators, as these roles positively impact the state's designation as a "Bicycle Friendly State" and to ensure that their significant expertise is retained to shepherd existing projects through the pipeline and to ensure that Transportation Alternatives is implemented smoothly.
  - d. Fully maximize Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School funding to MPOs from the Transportation Alternatives allocations.
  - e. Incorporate Complete Streets principles in all transportation projects.
  
3. Award Safe Routes to School grants from the competition held last year, and initiate another Safe Routes to School call for projects to fully max-out available SAFETEA-LU dollars.

### **Alignment with state policy**

This proposal, to keep level funding in New Jersey for bicycle and pedestrian programs, and to fully staff the effort through MAP-21, is aligned with New Jersey's state priorities including:

- The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the draft State Strategic Plan which emphasize healthy and sustainable communities.
- Programs like ShapingNJ, coordinated by New Jersey's Office of Nutrition and Fitness within the Department of Health and Sustainable Jersey (a voluntary municipal certification program), which promote synergistic partnerships and sustainable actions to reduce obesity and improve quality of life.
- Economic development efforts to increase jobs; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects create more jobs per million dollars than highway-only projects.
- Commitment to maintaining New Jersey's award-winning Complete Streets Policy in the Capital Program process.
- Commitments to serving lower-income communities and students statewide through Safe Routes to Schools.

- Efforts to reduce pedestrian and bicycle fatalities, which are 26% of all traffic fatalities, placing New Jersey second worst in the nation for its safety record, according to the 2012 Alliance for Biking & Walking Benchmarking Report.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests and how they align with existing state policy. We look forward to working together with the New Jersey Department of Transportation on the implementation of MAP-21.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Steiner  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Bike & Walk  
Coalition

Deborah Hubsmith  
Director  
Safe Routes to School  
National Partnership

Peter Kasabach  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Future

Veronica Vanterpool  
Executive Director  
Tri-State Transportation  
Campaign

Cc:

The Honorable Chris Christie, Governor of New Jersey  
Sheree Davis, New Jersey Office of Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs  
Mary Kay Murphy, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority  
Timothy G. Chelius, South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization  
Barry Seymour, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

1. AARP
2. American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
3. Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
4. Bicycle Touring Club of North Jersey
5. Bike & Walk Montclair
6. Bike and Walk Morristown
7. Bike Hoboken
8. Bike New York
9. BikeOCNJ.org
10. Borough of Princeton Traffic and Transportation  
Committee
11. Brick City Bike Collective
12. Central Jersey Bicycle Club, Inc.
13. Colavita-Baci U19
14. Cranford Bike Club
15. East Coast Greenway Alliance
16. Environment New Jersey
17. Essex County Environmental Commission
18. Garfield Health Department
19. Gran Fondo NJ
20. Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
21. Greater Mercer TMA

22. Hackensack Riverkeeper, Inc.
23. Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association
24. Jersey Shore Touring Society
25. Major Taylor Cycling Club of New Jersey
26. Manalapan Parks and Recreation
27. Team Marty's
28. Mayor Stephen DiDonato, Town of Hammonton
29. Mayor Dawn Zimmer, City of Hoboken
30. Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, West Windsor Township
31. Meadowlink
32. Medford Township Bicycle Task Force
33. Monmouth Heritage Trails Inc.
34. Montclair Cyclists
35. Montclair Township
36. Morris Area Freewheelers
37. Morris Area Freewheelers Foundation
38. New Jersey Bicycling Association
39. New Jersey Conservation Foundation
40. New Jersey Recreation and Park Association
41. New Jersey Trails Council
42. New Jersey YMCA State Alliance
43. NJ Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation  
and Dance
44. PlanSmart NJ
45. Point Pleasant Police Department
46. Princeton Cycling
47. Princeton Free Wheelers
48. Princeton Joint Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory  
Committee
49. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
50. Regional Plan Association
51. Bike Walk New Brunswick
52. Somerset Wheelmen
53. South Brunswick Department of Parks and Recreation
54. South Jersey Wheelmen Bicycle Club
55. South Mountain Conservancy
56. South Orange/Maplewood Bicycle Coalition
57. Sustainable Mullica
58. Team Bulldog
59. Team Montclair Bikery
60. TransOptions
61. Trenton Cycling Revolution
62. Walk Bloustein Bike Bloustein
63. West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance
64. Westfield Recreation Department
65. Woodbine Elementary School