



H.R. 4021, Safe Routes to High Schools

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Supported by: America Bikes, Safe Routes to Schools

The Challenge

Obesity rates for children between the ages of 12 and 19 have more than tripled in the past fifteen years, to the extent that 17.6% of high school age children are obese. This has a profound impact on the long term health of our nation, as 80% of obese children become obese adults, putting them at a higher risk for diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and other chronic health conditions. The Center for Disease Control recommends that children get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity five times a week, but statistics show that activity levels drop rapidly as students head into their high school years.

To combat the rise in teenage obesity, we should provide students between the ages of 12 and 19 with safe and easy exercise opportunities. Now is the time to encourage healthy, active lifestyles, and encourage children to see exercise as part of their daily life. Providing students with safe, active ways for them to get to and from school, at a time when they are seeking independence and cementing lifelong habits, makes students safer and healthier.

In addition to rising obesity rates among high school age students, increased traffic around school sites creates unnecessary congestion and motor vehicle safety hazards. 25% of the traffic within three miles of a school site comes from parents dropping children off or picking them up, making traffic accidents, the leading cause of death for children, all too common.

The Safe Routes to Schools program has been extraordinarily successful, with over 4,500 programs across the country, but it currently doesn't serve high schools, the population most likely to suffer from high rates of obesity and also most in need of flexible, independent transportation choices.

What this Legislation Would Do

The Safe Routes to High Schools Act amends SAFETEA-LU to expand the popular Safe Routes to Schools program to high schools. Currently, Safe Routes to Schools is restricted to primary and middle schools, but this legislation would allow high schools to submit grant applications to increase the number of students who walk and bike to school. The Safe Routes to High Schools legislation will still prioritize primary and middle school projects, unless a school district submits a proposal to address a primary school, middle school and high school simultaneously.

This legislation allows a popular and valuable program to continue to serve students and families as they move through the school system.

For more information on Congressman Blumenauer's Livability agenda, contact Tyler Frisbee in DC at (202) 225-4811, or Meeky Blizgard in Portland at (503) 231-2300, or online at <http://blumenauer.house.gov/>.