

August 10th, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Secretary Ananth Prasad, Florida Dept. of Transportation

FROM:

Florida Bicycle Association - Tim Bustos, Tim@floridabicycle.org
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**RE: Proposal to Florida Department of Transportation:
MAP-21 Implementation Recommendations**

We the undersigned organizations request that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) implement the MAP-21 legislation in a way that fully funds, staffs, and implements the new Transportation Alternatives program as well as continues the Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) and Recreational Trails (Rec Trails) programs. All of these programs should maximize Florida's investments in safe and accessible streets in all transportation projects and work towards better connecting our communities with alternative transportation systems. With Florida's ranking as the most dangerous state in the nation for pedestrians and cyclists, and FDOT's stated commitment to addressing this problem, MAP-21 offers FDOT an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment by making the safety of pedestrians and cyclists its #1 transportation priority.

It is hoped that by coming together as a common voice, and communicating our joint vision for this new federal legislation, it will demonstrate unity amongst many of the state's leading advocacy organizations that support walking, bicycling, trails and alternative transportation and, as such, have impact and be considered useful.

Recommendations for MAP-21 implementation:

We respectfully request that FDOT include the following elements in its implementation of the federal transportation bill:

1. No transfer of ANY funds away from Transportation Alternatives (TA) – and continue a focus on walking, bicycling and trail facilities;
2. Fund the Recreational Trails program at the previous funding level and not opt-out;
3. Maintain the Safe Routes to School program at the previous funding level along with coordinators and bicycle-pedestrian program managers;
4. Promptly award Transportation Alternatives grants with relevant stakeholders participating;
5. Preserve spending authority to allow for 100% obligation and expenditure of these program funds;
6. Honor the commitment to all previously awarded SRTS, TE and Rec Trails program projects. Preserve TE reserves from SAFETEA-LU to provide funding where the specific project has not been identified in the 2012-2017 STIP. For these funds, adopt a list of eligible projects which matches the SAFETEA-LU Transportation Enhancements project eligibility criteria, minus categories that were specifically eliminated in MAP-21 such as transportation museums;
7. Adopt a complete streets program to ensure that the needs of all users are taken into account on all transportation projects and programs;
8. Implement the new performance measurement provisions to fully integrate alternative transportation into the state's goals and measures;
9. Use the strengthened and outcome-based safety program in MAP-21 to make reducing Florida's bike/ped fatality rates its #1 priority and revamp Florida's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) towards achieving that outcome.
10. Use Surface Transportation Funds to cover any potential shortfalls in the 5-year State Transportation Improvement (STIP) and supplement TA funds with flexible funds, such as the Surface Transportation Program (STP), to both honor existing projects in the pipeline previously approved under Transportation Enhancements (TE), SRTS and Rec Trails programs and move these activities forward under MAP-21. Restore available funds to current levels.

Background

Walking, bicycling, trails and SRTS are important transportation facilities and popular throughout Florida. In 2011, Florida obligated approximately \$63,921,872 million using federal funds from the following categories:

- Recreational Trails: \$3,500,000 – distributed by the state
- Safe Routes to School: \$13,892,932 – distributed by the state
- Transportation Enhancement: \$46,528,940

Need for active transportation

More than 25 percent of all traffic collision deaths in Florida in 2010 were suffered by pedestrians and cyclists, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The comparable national average was 15%.¹ Florida has experienced 5,300 pedestrian deaths in the last decade – unfortunately leading the nation. Additionally, the Dangerous by Design report by Transportation for America recently named the Orlando metropolitan area as the most dangerous urban environment for pedestrians in the entire nation and the state was also home to 4 of the 5 worst metropolitan areas.

There is tremendous need and demand for more funds to support safe pedestrian and bicycle projects and programs in Florida, as evidenced by the vast popularity of the TE, SRTS and Rec Trails programs. In addition, according to the 2009 National Household Travel Survey, 10.4% of trips in Florida are made on foot or by bicycle. But federal funding for walking and bicycling has amounted to less than 2% of the total surface transportation apportionment. Now is not the time to reduce that funding.

MAP-21 changes

The new federal surface transportation act, MAP-21 (a two-year bill commencing October 1, 2012) makes changes to the funding categories. A new Transportation Alternatives program (section 1122) combines the aforementioned three pedestrian and bicycle projects plus additional activities into a new category called “Transportation Alternatives” and funds this new program at two-thirds of prior levels. Transportation Alternatives allows for the Recreational Trails program to be funded off the top of Transportation Alternatives at 2009 levels. The remaining funds are split 50/50 between state and local programming. Both the state and MPO funds are to be distributed in a competitive grant process.

MAP-21 provides states several opportunities to opt-out of funding for bike/ped programs or allows them to transfer funds to other activities. Where those options exist, we request that FDOT commit to not opting out or not transferring funds away from these critical bike/ped programs.

¹  2010 FARS data: <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/People/PeopleAllVictims.aspx>

Programming of funds for FY13 – FY 15 and beyond

Florida law provides certain protections to projects already in the STIP. Projects that are funded further out in the STIP should also be protected. An effective way to protect this and honor this pipeline is through the use of STP funds. We recommend that FDOT make up for any funding shortfall created by MAP-21 funding levels by shifting STP funds to this top priority. See this link for additional insights - <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ProgramDevelopmentOffice/federal/stip.shtm>

It is important to note that most of the MAP-21 funds are already committed to projects, since many of the TE, SRTS, and Rec Trails projects are programmed 2-5 years in advance. The projects already approved by FDOT and local MPO's should be fully funded under the new MAP-21 funding structure, assuming the projects still meet the eligibility criteria in the new legislation. FDOT and local communities have released press releases and news articles have appeared in papers throughout the state celebrating the funding of these projects!

For example, Florida will receive approximately \$50 million in TA funding through MAP-21 in FY13 and FY14. With Rec Trails funds taken off the top of the TA pot, that leaves \$46.6M of TA funds to be split between the state and the large MPO's for a total of \$23.3M/each. To maintain FY11 funding levels for TE, SRTS and Rec Trails programs (\$67.7M/year) the \$21.1 million funding shortfall can be flexed from STP.

Treatment of Safe Routes to School State program

Florida has supported SRTS projects since its own program began many years ago. If FDOT wished to take advantage of MAP-21's flexibility to combine the SRTS (state) and SRTS (federal) programs, we would like to work with you to ensure that:

1. At least \$10M/year continues to be provided (matching current investment levels from both the state and federal programs);
2. Stand-alone non-infrastructure projects continue to be eligible for 30% of the total funds as is currently the case for federal SRTS funds;
3. The state continues the practice of allowing FDOT districts to program the proportionate amount of their funds with the central office validating these selections;
4. The environmental review process is easy to implement for local sponsors.

Treatment of the Recreational Trails program

The Rec Trails program should remain fully intact, continue at a funding level that makes it a viable and desirable grant program and continue to allow for administration and education categories.

The Central Office should continue to work with the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails in implementation and ensure that the program supports mutual goals, such as advancing and implementing the Florida Greenways and Trails System.

Fully integrate alternative transportation in various programs under MAP-21

MAP-21 provides FDOT with an opportunity to ensure that the needs of all users are taken into account at the front-end of planning every transportation project. One of the best ways to ensure that this approach is integrated into transportation planning is to adopt and put into practice a complete streets policy. We urge FDOT to adopt a complete streets program and provide tools and encouragement to MPO's to implement this approach.

We also urge FDOT to implement the new performance measures provisions in the new law in a way that makes alternative transportation a major objective and measures progress toward that goal through the investments that the state and local governments make.

The HSIP in MAP-21 strengthens the existing program and requires for the first time that safety considerations of all road users be taken in account in construction and repair of the transportation system through state complete streets policies. Consistent with the statute's emphasis on performance-based management, the State will be required to demonstrate achievement of the goals to reduce fatalities and injuries on all roads, as established in the state's strategic highway safety plan. Given that Florida ranks #1 in the nation for its rate of pedestrian and cyclist fatalities, the #1 safety goal must be to address this problem.

The new legislation provides opportunities for FDOT to strengthen its HSIP and place a key emphasis on investments in bike/ped projects that will result in greatly reducing the high rate of bike/ped fatalities in Florida. A detailed report about Florida's HSIP, along with a set of recommendations, was issued by BikeWalkLee can be found at: www.bikewalklee.org/BWL_PDFs/BWL_facts/BWLSafetyfundingFINAL100222.pdf.

We urge you to consider these recommendations as you revise the HSIP and would like to work with you moving forward to ensure that the program is designed to accomplish the important goal of making Florida a safe place for pedestrians and cyclists.

Strong support, aligns with state priorities

During the debate about the federal transportation bill, many organizations and numerous communities sent letters to Congressman John Mica, along with formal resolutions, asking for continued dedicated pedestrian, bicycle, trail and SRTS funding. There is also support from localities which have been awarded funds for Rec Trails, SRTS and TE funds, particularly from those localities that are expecting funds from TE and SRTS that have already been announced.

Our proposal closely aligns with state priorities and needs in that:

- FDOT, and you, have stated the Department's commitment to addressing Florida's status as the most dangerous state for pedestrians and cyclists, and recently launched a series of roundtables throughout the state focused on pedestrian and cyclist safety. The facts are that pedestrians and bicyclists, including a significant number of children going to and from school, suffer a disproportionate share of transportation-related injuries and fatalities in this state. Pedestrians and bicyclists make up a fairly small percentage of overall travelers in Florida yet approximately one-quarter of traffic collision fatalities are suffered by people walking or bicycling, an unacceptably tragic and avoidable consequence of dangerous roads that bike/ped funding programs address;
- The state has already programmed SRTS, TE and Rec Trails program funds and should honor these commitments;
- Active transportation (walking, bicycling, and wheeling to destinations) can reduce Florida's health costs, since it has a direct health benefit, and can reduce the risk of heart disease, improve mental health, lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of overweight and obesity related chronic disease such as Type 2 diabetes;²
- Programs that facilitate safe walking and bicycling increase social interaction and community cohesion and can help reduce crime and increase property values, making Florida a more attractive place for businesses, workers, and families that it wants to attract and retain;
- Pedestrian, bicycle and SRTS projects create jobs efficiently. Creating new jobs is a priority for Florida and this Administration. A recent study showed that active transportation projects create more jobs per dollar spent than do road and highway projects that lack an active transportation component. For each \$1 million spent,

² L.D. Frank, M. Andresen, and T. Schmid, "Obesity Relationships with Community Design, Physical Activity, and Time Spent in Cars," in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 27 (2004): 87-96, <http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797%2804%2900087-X/abstract>; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General* (Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 1999) <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/index.htm>; U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, *Guide to Clinical Preventive Services*, 2nd ed (Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins, 1996): 611-624; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Physical Activity Fundamental*.

bicycle and pedestrian projects created a total of between 9.5 and 11.4 jobs while road-only projects created 7.8 jobs per \$1 million spent;³

- With very little school bus funding in Florida, SRTS serves the critical need of getting kids to and from school safely, helping to reduce parent driving to and from school and congestion on our over-crowded and aging roads and highways;
- A 2007 study funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control on preventing chronic disease found that SRTS projects around the nation have significant public health benefits for young people and the larger community, including adults.⁴ Improving the health of Florida children is a goal of the state and will reduce its current and future health costs;
- Mobility for seniors is an important and growing concern in Florida, which has more than its share of retirees. Low-cost investments in walking and biking infrastructure can keep Florida seniors in their homes longer, giving them independence and saving government long-term care costs.

Conclusion

In summary, we urge FDOT to continue funding for these important bike/ped programs and not to opt out of or reduce funding for any of them. Furthermore, we urge FDOT to integrate alternative transportation into every facet of its MAP-21 implementation-- from a complete streets approach in designing all road projects, to the revamping of its safety programs, and the design of the newly required performance goals and measures, to funding. We offer to work with FDOT as it develops its implementation strategy for MAP-21. If we work together, we believe, Florida can achieve our mutual goals of making our state safer for pedestrians and cyclists and having a balanced multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of all users.

Cc: Assistant Secretary Brian Blanchard, Florida Dept. of Transportation
Bob Romig, State Transportation Development Administrator
Senator Jack Latvala, Chairman, Florida Senate Transportation Committee

3 ³ Political Economy Research Institute, "Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts", Heidi Garrett-Peltier, accessed 7-19-12, <http://www.peri.umass.edu/236/hash/64a34bab6a183a2fc06fdc212875a3ad/publication/467>

4 ⁴ Watson M, Dannenberg AL. Investment in Safe Routes to School projects: public health benefits for the larger community. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2008;5(3). http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/jul/07_0087.htm. Accessed July 20, 2012.