

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 17, 2012

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FLORIDA ORGANIZATIONS UNITE BEHIND TRANSPORTATION VISION

Broad coalition says state must support funding for safer, more balanced system

TALLAHASSEE, FLA - Florida's leading active transportation advocates are united in calling for a more balanced transportation system—including increased investment in walking, bicycling and trail facilities—to meet the urgent needs of Florida's communities.

The new federal transportation bill recently enacted by Congress, MAP-21, provides less guaranteed funding for biking and walking and gives states the ability to "opt out" of some programs. However, states also have the flexibility to maximize funds available for bicycle and pedestrian projects under the new Transportation Alternatives program, as well as using the larger core transportation and safety funds to increase the safety and convenience of biking and walking.

Florida's top transportation advocates are calling on the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to continue funding for bike/ped programs. They are also urging FDOT to integrate alternative transportation options into its implementation of the new federal law. "Bicyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles are all equal legal road users in the state of Florida, so as planners, engineers and advocates we have an obligation to provide for safe and effective access to our roads for all modes of transportation," says Tim Bustos with the Florida Bicycle Association.

But with the recent passage of MAP-21, there is much less dedicated funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects, and the state has much more authority to use these limited funds for other purposes—even though Florida has been rated as the most dangerous state in the country to walk or ride a bike. "We are hoping this new effort on the part of Florida's major walking and biking organizations to work with the Florida Department of Transportation will help ensure funding is spent where it's needed—making Florida safer for all road users," says Bustos.

This display of unity among the state's leading advocacy organizations demonstrates the enormous support for active transportation—human-powered mobility—and for more transportation choices for individuals. These statewide and regional organizations represent millions of Floridians who walk, bike and use trails each year.

“Trails are transportation facilities that pull double duty as economic engines and recreational facilities for improved community health,” says Ken Bryan, Florida state director for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “In Orange County, the East Central Regional Planning Council found that three trails contributed \$42.6 million dollars to the local economy and supported 516 jobs.”

FDOT has made a stated commitment to address Florida's ranking as the most dangerous state in America for pedestrians and cyclists. MAP-21 offers transportation officials an opportunity to act on this commitment by making the safety of pedestrians and cyclists a transportation priority.

"Lee County has shown strong support for complete streets and increased investments in bike/ped facilities during the past three years," says Darla Letourneau of BikeWalkLee. "We hope that FDOT will adopt the recommendations proposed by the coalition of advocacy organizations, including BikeWalkLee, so that local officials and agencies will have the funding they need to continue moving forward on providing a more balanced multi-modal transportation system for the citizens of Lee County. It is also important that FDOT establish a truly performance-based system that ensures that Florida's transportation dollars are achieving the intended results of making our roadways safe and accessible for all users."

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This coalition is made up of 10 of the state's leading transportation and environmental organizations coming together as one voice for MAP-21 federal legislation implementation to ensure a safer Florida with more transportation choices. The coalition includes: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Florida Bicycle Association, Green Mobility Network, BikeWalkLee, Naples Pathways Coalition, South Florida Audubon Society, Smart Growth Partnership, Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, South West Florida Bicycle United Dealers, and Friends of the River of Grass Greenway.