



Active Community Transportation Act of 2010 U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), H.R. 4722

Fact Sheet

What is it?

The Active Community Transportation Act ("ACT Act") of 2010, a marker bill to be incorporated into the federal transportation reauthorization when passed by Congress, will provide communities with concentrated investments to complete walking and bicycling networks to shift short driving trips to active transportation. By providing communities with the resources needed to build safe and connected non-motorized routes between the places where people live, work, learn, play and shop, the bill will provide cost-effective transportation choices for millions of Americans.

What will the Act achieve?

Ultimately, providing people with the option to walk and bike to get where they're going improves mobility and reduces congestion for everyone. Studies and experience clearly demonstrate that when safe and convenient opportunities are provided, significant numbers of people choose to walk or bike, especially for shorter distances that make up half of the trips taken in America. Even a marginal reduction in the number of vehicles on the road results in decreased congestion. Therefore, modest shifts substantially improve mobility, even for those who choose to drive.

Further, there are many benefits of active transportation beyond improved mobility. Building active transportation infrastructure creates as many, if not more¹, jobs than road or highway construction. Investing in walking and bicycling increases business vitality, livability, home values, safety and physical activity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, oil dependency, air pollution and obesity.

How will the program be administered? Which communities will participate?

The U.S. Department of Transportation will administer a competitive fund, which will invest in communities that best make the case for resources to shift large numbers of trips from driving to walking and bicycling.

How much will the program cost? From where will the funds come?

The bill calls for the creation of an active transportation fund, authorized at an average of \$400 million per year. The funds will be set aside within the Surface Transportation Program. This level of funding will allow dozens of communities around the country to participate.

Who can apply?

Qualified applicants include local or regional government organizations, tribal agencies and multi-county districts that have active transportation plans.

When will the funding be available?

The active transportation fund will have two grant application rounds. The first application round will take place 180 days after the passage of the bill. Qualified communities will receive annual grants ranging from \$5 million to \$15 million for five years (total of \$25 to \$75 million). Up to 75 percent of the total funds will be obligated in this first round of grant applications. The second application round will take place within two years after the passage of the bill. Qualified communities will receive annual grants ranging from \$5 million to \$15 million for three years (total

¹ Due to the material-intensive requirements of road building compared to the relatively greater labor-intensive requirements of active transportation infrastructure, roads can be expected to create fewer jobs per dollar than would active transportation infrastructure.



of \$15 to \$45 million). If a community fails to meet its obligations under the program, the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary is authorized to discontinue funds.

What is the federal interest in creating this program? Isn't this a local issue?

For the past half-century, the federal government has spent the overwhelming majority of its transportation resources building an extensive road system to facilitate travel by automobile. The resulting system meets the demands of some of its users very well, but it is so one-dimensional that it fails to meet all of our nation's mobility needs, resulting in major inefficiencies. Further, this automobile-dominated transportation system creates gross inequities to the millions of Americans who cannot and do not drive. Mobility must be provided for all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users.

Further, a multimodal system is essential to our national transportation goals. Just as an ecosystem thrives on the interactions of a diverse web of life, and a financial manager seeks a balanced portfolio of investments, transportation systems work best when there are multiple modes to reach our destinations.

Additionally, given the federal burden of mitigating damage to the environment, pursuing expensive policies that guarantee freedom from a foreign oil market, and paying for health care costs, the adoption of policies that reduce the burden of these costs is good federal leadership. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's *Active Transportation for America* report² found that, as a nation, we would save at least between \$10 and \$66 billion annually with a greater federal investment in active transportation.

Will Americans really walk or bike to their destinations?

Yes! About 90 percent of transit trips are accessed by foot or bicycle, and approximately 10 percent of all trips in the U.S. are already accomplished by walking or bicycling—despite a predominance of funding for motorized transportation. The opportunity for more active transportation is great: nearly half of the trips taken in the United States today are within a 20-minute bicycle ride, and half of these trips are within a 20-minute walk. Yet, the vast majority of these short trips are taken by car.

By combining walking or bicycling trips with the greater reach of public transit, Americans can travel substantial distances without the need of an automobile. Communities that invest in active transportation experience significant increases in walking and bicycling over time.

Who is behind this effort?

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has been the lead advocate behind the creation of this bill, organizing dozens of communities around the country of all sizes and demographics. Most of these communities have been engaged for years, committing local resources to their organizing and planning efforts, engaging mayors, city and county councils, advocacy and business leaders in the process.

Additionally, the program is part of the transportation reauthorization platforms of America Bikes and Transportation for America. A national letter of support has been signed by representatives from more than 300 groups, including 26 national groups and more than 30 mayors and other elected officials. The draft bill was authored by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (Ore.), and Representatives Carnahan (Mo.), Capuano (Mass.), Cohen (Tenn.), Filner (Calif.), Lipinski (Ill.) and Moran (Va.) have committed to being original co-sponsors.

For more information, including the bill language and a link to the above letter of support with instructions to sign on, see www.railstotrails.org/ACT.

² www.railstotrails.org/ATFA