April 9, 2014

Dear Member of Congress,

Crossing the street shouldn't mean crossing your fingers. Sadly, every two hours a pedestrian is killed because of unsafe streets—streets built with federal transportation funds, but not necessarily designed and built with all users in mind.

The Safe Streets Act (S. 2004) will ensure that state transportation agencies and the communities they serve use proven design elements to improve the safety of all roadway users, including people driving cars, walking, biking and taking public transit. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reported a two percent decrease in roadway fatalities between 2010 and 2011. Over the same time period, however, pedestrian deaths increased by three percent and bicyclist deaths by nine percent. Of the more than 47,000 pedestrian fatalities from 2000 to 2009, 67 percent occurred on federal-aid roadways.

Safer streets aren't just an issue for urban areas. Residents of small towns are more likely to be injured or killed on the transportation system than residents of urban areas. In 2011, 55 percent of all traffic fatalities, including fatalities among motorists, pedestrians and cyclists, occurred in rural areas. Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities accounted for 16 percent of all deaths on America's roadways in 2011. We can do better. S. 2004 shows us how.

Although Congress has passed tough robust measures related to vehicle design, one-third of Americans do not drive. This one-third largely includes older adults, children, and people with disabilities, along with those people waiting for public transit, riding bicycles, and crossing the street once they park their cars.

S. 2004 does not authorize new funding. Nor does it require that transportation agencies use a particular roadway design—or tell highway engineers how to build individual projects. It simply calls upon U.S. DOT, state transportation agencies, and metropolitan planning organizations using federal transportation funds to adopt a policy that ensures the safety of all expected roadway users is considered when building new or substantially rebuilding existing non-Interstate facilities. By considering all users and unique roadway context at the beginning of a project, these policies avoid costly project delays and expensive retrofits.

The National Complete Streets Coalition and its allies urge you to co-sponsor this roadway safety bill. The diverse support for S. 2004 reflects the variety of benefits that a multimodal approach affords communities and individuals: promoting safety for all users; providing opportunities for healthy, active living and increased travel choices; supporting prosperity in local economies; and reducing household transportation costs for American families.

S. 2004 won't fix our roadway safety problems overnight. Over time, however, roadways will begin to be designed and built more safely.

Please become a co-sponsor of S. 2004 today by contacting Stef Claus, Office of Senator Mark Begich at (202) 224-9546 or stef_claus@begich.senate.gov.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
AARP
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Sports Medicine
Association for Commuter Transportation
American Heart Association
American Planning Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
America Walks
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Center for Planning Excellence
Greenbelt Alliance
GrowSmart Maine
Institute for Transportation and Development Policy
League of American Bicyclists
Local Government Commission
Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance
Mode Shift Omaha
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Realtors
National Complete Streets Coalition
National Recreation and Park Association
Safe Kids Worldwide
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Sierra Club
Partnership for Active Transportation
Transportation for America
Transportation Choices Coalition
Trust for America's Health