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Eugene, OR 97402

July 9, 2012

Metropolitan Policy Committee
c/o Paul Thompson
Lane Council of Governments
859 Willamette Street, Suite 500
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Members of the Metropolitan Policy Committee:

I encourage your approval for STP-U funding of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program for 2012-2013. It is a wise and foresighted regional investment for our economy, youth health, and preservation of the Central Lane MPO's transportation network.

Walking and biking to school is good for our youth. Peer-reviewed research clearly shows that children who walk and bicycle to school are more physically active, have lower body mass index scores, lower obesity levels, and are more like to meet physical activity guidelines than students who are bused or driven to school. (American Journal of Preventative Medicine 29 (2005): 3, 179 -184).

Economically, reducing congestion due to school traffic decreases the money burned through the tail pipe. Among US children who live less than a mile from school, 43 percent are driven to school and at peak hour. This pattern costs the region in many ways. The Regional Transportation Options Plan's Existing Conditions Report notes:

As of 2004, the Central Lane MPO estimated that there were 14,140 daily hours of delay due to congestion (Central Lane MPO, 2007). The think tank RAND estimates that each hour of delay for passenger vehicles costs the economy \$14.60, and \$77 for freight trucks. As such, overall daily costs to the economy and to the region's households from congestion in the Central Lane MPO Area average \$1,295,224 a day. Under current growth trends, daily hours of delay are estimated to increase to 40,460 hours by 2031, nearly tripling costs to the economy.

Finally, teaching children how to safely use existing infrastructure is an investment in future travel behavior. It establishes healthy transportation habits early and at an impressionable age. Providing youth with the necessary skills on how to use active transportation safely has profound and lasting effects on our community's transportation resources. Use of active travel options cost effectively preserves the transportation network and builds capacity.

The current SRTS programs, hosted in the Eugene 4J and Bethel School Districts and supported in Springfield through point2point Solutions, are invaluable assets to our regional approach to transportation.

Please support the SRTS funding request. The investment today addresses the immediate needs of improving youth health, reducing congestion, and positioning the region to maintain a well balanced system.

Sincerely,


Christian L. Watchie