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CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
HEARING ON THE FEDERAL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
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I thank Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Duncan for holding this important hearing.

For all of the years I have been with this committee, first as a staffer and then as a Member, I've learned that rarely do you get the opportunity to change the habits of an entire generation. The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is our opportunity.

I authored this provision in response to an unsettling trend. In the last 40 years, the number of kids walking and biking to school has dropped precipitously, from nearly half to less than 15 percent. This trend is fueled by everything from parental concerns over safety to a society that has become ever more dependent upon the automobile.

The \$612 million provided by the Congress in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) has already been put to good use for infrastructure projects such as sidewalks, street crossing improvements, traffic calming, and intersection upgrades. It has generated educational programs that teach pedestrian, cyclist, and traffic safety. And it has reached almost 700 schools in just the first two years of the program.

These are no small gains; I could not be more pleased with the progress of the Safe Routes program after such a short time. In all 50 states and the District of Columbia, SRTS state coordinators have worked with school officials, law enforcement, families and children, and all levels of government to get their programs off of the ground.

The Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse has been established, and under the direction of Lauren Marchetti is providing a wealth of knowledge to aid states in starting their program. The Clearinghouse facilitates the learning and sharing of best practices, which will be key for this program to reach its full potential.

The Safe Routes Task Force is also hard at work charting a course for the future of this program. The Congress will be looking to their work to guide us during the next surface transportation reauthorization.

SRTS puts our infrastructure to work for the safety of our kids. Alone, that is a goal that deserves the focus of the Congress. But in addition to making our kids safer, the SRTS program has a number of other benefits.

We know that kids today are spending more time in front of the television and computer screens, and less time playing outdoors. As a result, we are facing an obesity epidemic that afflicts nearly one fifth of our youth. Kids are struggling with illnesses that

previously only impacted adults, including Type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol and blood pressure.

By giving kids a fun and safe way to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, we are teaching them at a young age how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

We are also teaching them how to be good stewards of the environment. The threat of climate change is growing, and America is working to respond through innovation and technology. But we can't forget the simple actions we can take a regular basis to make a difference.

Walking and biking have the benefit of being both environmentally-friendly and kid-friendly. Let's teach our kids now that they do not have to be dependent on cars as their sole mode of transportation.

Increased safety, healthier lifestyles, a cleaner environment; in these many ways, we can instill in our children positive habits that will last a lifetime.

I am looking forward to the testimony from our witnesses and hope that this hearing can be the first step in assessing and improving the federal Safe Routes to School program.