



Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition

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Contact:

Karen Lyons, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
651-662-1415 (o), 612-408-0770 (c)
karen_m_lyons@bluecrossmn.com

Cathy Kennedy, Minnesota Environmental Partnership
952-944-6559 (o), 612-309-3951 (c)
cathryn@cathrynkennedy.com

Broad coalition praises Complete Streets bill introduced in Minnesota legislature

(ST. PAUL) - A measure to make roads safer and more accessible for all Minnesotans – regardless of age or ability or whether traveling by car, bus, bike or on foot – was introduced into the Minnesota legislature today. The “Complete Streets” bills, SF 2461 and HF 2801, are supported by a broad coalition of health, family, environment, senior, and transportation advocates who attended an afternoon press conference.

“We live on the edge of Eagan and Rosemount just a couple miles from Lebanon Hills Park and a new library – but the sad part is we can’t get to these places safely on foot or by bike,” said Jene’ Leiner, an Inver Grove Heights mother of three young children. “I’d like my kids to be active, but I’d rather start up my car and drive them than risk their safety along a 50 mile per hour road with no sidewalks or bike lanes.”

Complete Streets is a common-sense design process that helps the Minnesota Department of Transportation respond to local needs and local users. Complete Streets removes the need for multiple designs and variances in an effort to build roads right the first time, rather than fixing them after a tragedy occurs.

In the past decade, more than 500 bicyclists and pedestrians have been killed, and another 20,000 injured on Minnesota roads, said

Minnesota Representative Mike Obermueller (DFL – Eagan), House author, about his impetus for sponsoring the bill.

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"One of the reasons for these injuries and fatalities is that state standards too often dictate that Minnesota roads move cars as quickly as possible and ignore the abilities of seniors, children, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders," Obermueller said.

"Minnesota seniors and children are especially vulnerable to transportation systems that are designed almost exclusively for moving automobiles," said Bob Geyen, State Volunteer Leader for AARP, one of 48 organizations supporting the bill. Geyen pointed to the example of an 86-year-old Chaska man, who was struck and killed by a car as he tried to walk across busy Highway 41 to go to church.

"That very unfortunate outcome could have been prevented had the road been designed for all users, regardless of age or ability," Geyen added.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) also backs the bill. Blue Cross' Chief Prevention Officer, Dr. Marc Manley, cited the more than 60 percent of adult Minnesotans who are overweight or obese and said that if left unchecked, obesity will add another \$3.7 billion in health care expenses for Minnesotans by 2020.

"Current road designs often create barriers and discourage people from walking and biking," Manley said, "We need to make it easier for people to be active and achieve or maintain a healthy weight. This Complete Streets policy is a creative solution that not only can make our transportation dollars stretch farther, but also encourage more people to lead an active lifestyle, thereby improving health and saving health care dollars."

The Minnesota Department of Transportation issued a state-mandated report last year in favor of a state Complete Streets policy. Nationally, eighteen states and more than 100 communities have policies supporting complete streets. In Minnesota, Rochester, St. Paul, Albert Lea, Bloomington and Hennepin County have either passed Complete Streets policies or are working to implement them.

The Complete Streets concept is broadly supported by Minnesotans. A recent statewide poll by the Minnesota Environmental Partnership found that 73 percent of Minnesotans support a policy that would encourage communities to build roads for all users, including transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Senator Tony Lourey (DFL – Kerrick), chief Senate author, said Complete Streets would only change the design of future projects, and not demand the retrofitting of existing roads. In the long run this will potentially save money by preventing costly retro-fits that sometimes occur when a street or road is deemed unsafe for pedestrians and other users, Lourey added.

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Complete Streets has bipartisan support in the legislature. Authors include:

Senate:

Sen. Tony Lourey (D-Kerrick)
Sen. Scott Dibble (D-Mpls)
Sen. Michael Jungbauer (R-East Bethel)
Sen. Ann Rest (D-New Hope)
Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont)

House:

Rep. Mike Obermueller (D-Eagan)
Rep. Bernie Lieder (D-Crookston)
Rep. Kim Norton (D-Rochester)
Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids)
Rep. Phillip Sterner (D-Rosemount)

Members of the Complete Streets Coalition, include:

AARP

Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
Alliance for Sustainability
American Council of the Blind of Minnesota
American Heart Association
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
Bloomington City Councilmember Steve Elkins
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
Blue Zones--Dan Buettner
Catalyst
Cedar Ave United
City of Saint Paul
Conservation Minnesota
Dero Bike Rack Company
Fit City Duluth
Fresh Energy
Friends of Washington County
Growth and Justice
Havefunbiking.com
HealthPartners
Howard R. Green Company
Joe Urban, Inc.
Local Initiatives Support

Corporation

Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota

Minneapolis Electric Bicycle Company
Minnesota Association of Small Cities
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Public Interest Research Group
Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition
Northfield Nonmotorized Transportation Task Force
Pates Planning and Design
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

Red Wing Housing and
Redevelopment Authority
Saint Paul Councilmember Russ
Stark
Saint Paul Riverfront
Corporation
Shifting Gears Bicycles
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
St. Paul Smart Trips
The Arc of Minnesota

The Corduroy Studio, Inc.
Transit for Livable
Communities
Transportation for America's
Minnesota Coalition
Twin Cities Streets for People
Urban Land Institute Minnesota
1000 Friends of Minnesota

For more information on the Minnesota Complete Streets effort,
visit www.mncompletestreets.org

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