



Supporting Safe Routes to School in Alaska

WHEREAS, Alaska is experiencing an obesity epidemic;

WHEREAS, the 2017 Alaska Obesity Facts report released by the Department of Health and Human Services found that close to one-third of Alaska's high school students are either overweight or obese, as are the same percentage of Alaska's three-year-olds;¹

WHEREAS, obesity places kids at risk for weight related disease such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol;

WHEREAS, obesity costs the state nearly \$460 million in direct medical health care expenses;²

WHEREAS, nearly half of all American children walked or biked to school in 1969;³

WHEREAS, fewer than 15% of children walk or bike to school today, according to the Journal of Physical Activity & Health;⁴

WHEREAS, children do not have the option of walking or biking to school if there is no safe route, are not able to walk to school for lack of a safe walking or biking route;

WHEREAS, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership found that walking or biking to school can give kids two-thirds of their daily physical activity requirement;⁵

WHEREAS, states may use roughly 1% of its available federal transportation funds on Transportation Alternatives, including trails and the Safe Routes to School Program;

WHEREAS, the Safe Routes to School program has traditionally received 18% of the state's available Transportation Alternative funds since the program's inception in 2005;⁶

WHEREAS, state departments of transportation may transfer up to half of the federal funding available for Transportation Alternatives like trails and the Safe Routes to School Program to be transferred to highways or other uses;⁷

¹ Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2017). *Alaska Obesity Facts Report – 2017*. Anchorage, Alaska.
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/Obesity/pubs/2017AlaskaObesityFacts.pdf>.

² *Id*

³ National Center for Safe Routes to School. School Travel Patterns Rom 1969 to 2009; November 2011.
http://archive.saferoutesinfo.org/sites/default/files/resources/NHTS_school_travel_report_2011_0.pdf.

⁴ *Id*

⁵ National Center for Safe Routes to School. Quick Facts and Stats. Accessed 12/11/17.
<https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/facts>.

⁶ National Center for Safe Routes to School.

⁷ National Center for Safe Routes to School. Funding History of Safe Routes. Accessed 12/11/17.
<https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/history>.



WHEREAS, over the past five years the Alaska Department of Transportation failed to make use of 30% of the \$24.5 million available for projects and programs that could benefit Safe Routes by allowing \$7.6 million to lapse back to the federal government or transferring it to highway projects;⁸

WHEREAS, the Safe Routes to School program has shown to be effective in developing infrastructure such as raised crosswalks in Cordova and a community walking path in Naknek to make walking and biking safer for Alaskans;

WHEREAS, federal regulations allow a small portion of the Safe Routes to School funding to be used for non-infrastructure investments such as teaching children how to walk and ride a bicycle safely, as was demonstrated by the successful Anchorage bike trailer program;

WHEREAS, coordinating with state agencies focused on child development and public health, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Development, when administering the Safe Routes to School Program could further enhance the effectiveness of the program and the health and safety of Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, the Safe Routes to School program is critical for supporting safe walking and biking opportunities and healthier Alaskans;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association urges the State of Alaska to invest all federal funding available for Transportation Alternatives in trails, bike and pedestrian infrastructure;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association urges the State of Alaska to invest at least 18% of the Transportation Alternatives funding in the Safe Routes to School Program;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association urges the State of Alaska to continue to invest Safe Routes to School funds in both infrastructure and non-infrastructure programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association will share this resolution the Governor and Lt. Governor of Alaska, the Alaska State Legislators, and the Commissioners of the Alaska Departments of Transportation, Education and Early Development, Health and Human Services.

FISCAL IMPACT ON ALPHA: This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to Alaska legislators and other government officials.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT: This action will support a program seeks to provide opportunities for all Alaskans to walk and bike safely. Walking and biking to school has been shown to provide two-thirds of the recommended daily physical activity and can be a significant step toward lowering Alaska's rate of obesity.

Adopted January 16, 2018

⁸ National Center for Safe Routes to School. *Transportation Alternatives Program and Safe Routes to School program - State of the States*; October 25, 2017. <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/tap-srts-state-states-sept-2017.pdf>.