

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2015

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer –

As the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works prepares to unveil a long-term reauthorization of our nation's transportation policy we ask that you include important updates to current law that promote and prioritize safety for all users of our nation's transportation system.

We are concerned that while overall fatalities due to traffic crashes have been on a steady decline over the last decade, totaling 32,719 in 2013, pedestrian fatalities have increased in total (4,735) and as a percentage of all fatalities (14 percent) compared with 2004.¹ Furthermore, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that in 2013, on average, a pedestrian was killed every two hours and injured in a traffic crash every eight minutes.²

In addition to the tragic human cost of these deaths, the total economic and societal cost of motor vehicle crashes in 2010 was calculated to be \$871 billion, according to a 2014 NHTSA report.³ Of that amount, events involving pedestrians and bicyclists accounted for \$90 billion, or 10.3 percent of the total.⁴

The people most likely to be killed or injured as pedestrians are children and seniors. According to Centers for Disease Control data from 2003 through 2010, pedestrian death among children aged 1 to 15 is the third leading cause of accidental injury death. Among older adults, people 65 and older accounted for 12.6 percent of the total population but about 21 percent of pedestrian fatalities from 2003 to 2010.⁵ Looking ahead, the number of people 65 and over is projected to nearly double from 2010 levels, reaching almost 80 million by 2035, or 20 percent of the total U.S. population.⁶ We have to be proactive in order to put in place now the kinds of strategies that will mitigate fatalities amongst our nation's elderly in the years ahead.

¹ <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812124.pdf>

² <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812124.pdf>

³ <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/812013.pdf>

⁴ <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/812013.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2014/Dangerous-by-Design-Report-2014.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.ssa.gov/oact/TR/2014/tr2014.pdf>

We believe a prudent response to this data is to include provisions in the next transportation reauthorization that unequivocally signals Congress's interest in seeing states take affirmative action to design roadways with all users in mind. That includes kids, youth, adults and the elderly who get around by foot, bicycle, bus, train or motor vehicle. For decades we have been a nation focused on getting adults in vehicles from point A to point B as quickly as possible. It absolutely remains a priority to maintain a system that gets people and goods where they need to go with minimal delay. Fortunately, many cities and towns have demonstrated that safety for all road users can be simultaneously accomplished.

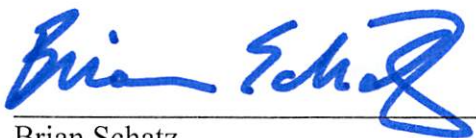
When it was determined the incidence of motor vehicle crashes was unacceptably high, Congress and the states made policy decisions that reduced accidents -- such as required use of seat belts, speed restrictions and crack downs on impaired and distracted driving. We should use the present opportunity to make targeted policy decisions that make roads, sidewalks and town centers safer for all users.

Specifically, we ask that you include language that:

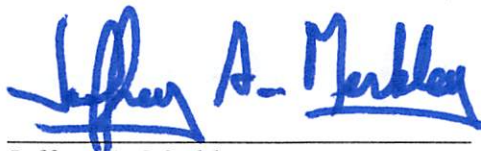
1. Directs state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations to adopt a policy that considers and seeks to accommodate safe access to the transportation system for all users of the system including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, children, older individuals, individuals with disabilities, motorists and freight vehicles.
2. Provides for clear exemptions to this planning requirement, such as excessive cost, and where a roadway prohibits use.
3. Directs the U.S. Department of Transportation to engage in relevant research and provide for technical assistance to States, metropolitan planning organizations and local jurisdictions to facilitate design and implementation of these types of planning strategies.

The goal of this policy is straightforward – reduce injury and fatalities among kids, adults and the elderly on our streets and in our cities. We hope you will seriously consider and ultimately embrace this approach.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



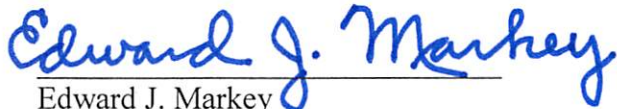
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United States Senator

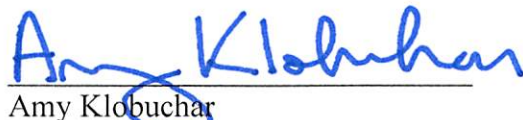

Tom Udall
United States Senator

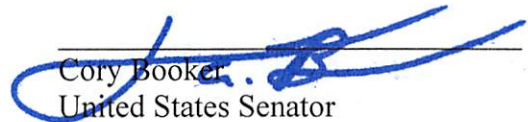

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