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AARP celebrates introduction of Senate Safe Streets bill

AARP today celebrated the introduction of The Safe Streets Act in the U. S. Senate and thanked co-sponsors Senators Mark Begich and Brian Schatz for introducing the bill. For the past decade, AARP has continually advocated for complete streets at both the federal and state levels as the most effective way to improve safety for everyone on America's streets or sidewalks. In her letter thanking the co-sponsors of the new bill (attached and reproduced below), AARP Senior Vice President for Government Affairs Joyce Rogers said "AARP supports your Safe

Streets legislation because it would ensure that federal transportation infrastructure investments provide safe travel for all -- whether driving, bicycling, walking, or taking public transportation. [. . .] Your bill will help ensure that all [road] users are safe, that scarce transportation dollars are spent wisely, and that Americans have choices in how they move around their neighborhoods."

February 6, 2014

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Begich and Schatz:

AARP strongly endorses the Safe Streets Act of 2014 which you are introducing today. This bipartisan legislation will help ensure that future transportation investments create appropriate and safe transportation facilities for all those using the nation's roads, regardless of age and ability.

AARP is committed to helping communities make the changes necessary to meet the needs of their growing older population. Safe mobility options are a key component of this effort and are essential to the independence and well-being of mid-life and older Americans. Fully one-fifth of persons age 65 and above does not drive. Yet almost half of respondents to an AARP survey of persons age 50 and above said they cannot safely cross the main roads in their neighborhoods.

As pedestrians, older adults are disproportionately at risk. While 13 percent of the population, seniors represented 20 percent of pedestrian fatalities in 2011. Tragically, a pedestrian is killed every two hours in the U.S. The pedestrian share of traffic fatalities has gone up over the last five years – fourteen percent of the total in 2011. It is critically important that policies are adopted to ensure that our streets are designed for all who use them.

Your legislation calls on states and metropolitan planning organizations to adopt complete streets policies for federally-funded projects within two years. These policies must ensure that the needs of all users of the transportation system are taken into account during the design, planning, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and operating phases of transportation project implementation.

In response to growing public safety concerns, the adoption of policies to ensure all users are safely accommodated has accelerated significantly over the past several years. Jurisdictions of all sizes and locations have adopted complete streets policies, now totaling over 600 – including 27 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. AARP has been active in advocating for many of these state and local policies.

AARP supports your Safe Streets legislation because it would ensure that federal transportation infrastructure investments provide safe travel for all -- whether driving, bicycling, walking, or taking public transportation. The improvements that allow older adults to travel by foot with ease benefit younger road users as well. Your bill will help ensure that all users are safe, that scarce transportation dollars are spent wisely, and that Americans have choices in how they move around their neighborhoods.

I would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your leadership on this issue in providing safer roads for all Americans, and particularly for those older road users who are most at risk. AARP appreciates your commitment and dedication to road safety for all Americans and we look forward to working with you towards accomplishment of this important goal. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Debra Alvarez in our Government Relations Department at (202) 434-3814.

Sincerely,

Joyce Rogers
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs
