



BikeWalk Virginia News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 27, 2007

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Win for Complete Streets Effort Applauded

Williamsburg, VA, December 27, 2007 - President Bush signed energy legislation on Wednesday, December 19, that included an important acknowledgement of highways as surfaces for transportation by more than motor vehicles. While the new law requires greater fuel-efficiency, it also promotes alternatives and encourages efficiency through efforts such as the development of complete streets.

"It is the sense of Congress that we have to think about roads being used by pedestrians and bicyclists," said Allen Turnbull, executive director of BikeWalk Virginia.

Section 1133 of the law states that in constructing new roadways or refurbishing existing facilities state and local governments should consider policies designed to accommodate all users, including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities. So-called "complete streets" would serve all users by creating a more interconnected and inter-modal system, allowing more viable transportation options, and facilitating the use of environmentally friendly options, such as public transportation, walking, and bicycling.

"Right now, many of Virginia's roads and streets are designed to move cars to their destination quickly," said Turnbull. "This means they are not safe for people on foot or bike."

According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, more than 50 states, regions, and localities have passed complete streets policies. Planners, engineers, and designers are being asked to build road networks that meet the needs of all citizens. The statement in the recently signed law provides additional support for the concept.

In his December 9 column in the Washington Post, Neal Peirce highlighted a "nationwide movement to fight the good fight for saner streets." He said that the National Complete Streets Coalition was "mounting a nationwide campaign for city and town roadways that include safe, quality space for pedestrians and cyclists and public transit users, accommodating their wishes just as seriously as those of car and truck drivers."

Peirce said a National Association of Realtors survey reported that 90 percent of us believe that new communities should be designed so we can walk more and drive less, and that public transportation should be improved and accessible. In addition, he noted that high and dangerous weight levels could be lowered by walking more. An average person walking half an hour a day would lose about 13 pounds a year.

"Complete streets will make the prospect of walking or cycling sound far more attractive," said Turnbull. "Walking, cycling, and public transit use can help us trim pounds, reduce stress, and greenhouse gases. Everyone wins."

An important provision in the bill was dealt a setback, however, when a compromise over a tax package was reached in order to save the bill. The Bicycle Commuter Act would have extended a fringe benefit currently available to transit users and car drivers to bicycle commuters.

To follow national, state, and local legislation affecting multi-modal transportation and to work with BikeWalk Virginia to improve recreation and transportation options for Virginians and visitors to Virginians, visit www.bikewalkvirginia.org to become an individual or business member.

BikeWalk Virginia was founded as a 501 (c)(3) organization in 2000. Originating in 1988 as a bicycling event, BikeWalk Virginia continues to organize nationally recognized Bike Virginia rides to fund education and advocacy for non-motorized transportation safety and access. BikeWalk Virginia holds an annual conference as a forum for legislators, planners, educators and advocates on key issues critical to pedestrians and cyclists. In 2004, the Virginia Trails Association joined BikeWalk. The group's mission was broadened to include on and off road riders, hikers, kayakers, canoeists, and equestrians.

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Digital photos are available upon request. Contact Sara Lewis, BikeWalk Virginia, 757-229-0507 or slewis@bikewalkvirginia.org.