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Federal Transportation Bill Threatens Pedestrian, Cycling Safety Funding

Statement from Steven Higashide, Tri-State Transportation Campaign Federal Advocate:

The House of Representatives' Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is set to vote on the five-year federal transportation reauthorization bill tomorrow, and the draft legislation would put New Jersey's pedestrians, cyclists, and economy at risk.

The bill would eliminate funding for two important programs: Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School.

Currently, these programs help keep pedestrians safe. Over the years, they have helped pay for life-saving measures like new sidewalks, streetscape improvements, bike lanes, and crosswalks. But the work isn't done yet: 1,514 pedestrians died in New Jersey between 2000 and 2009, and the state needs continued federal funding to address the problem. These are small programs—they make up just 2% of federal transportation spending—but they go a long way.

These programs aren't just for safety—they're also vital to New Jersey's economy. Based on our work with local leaders, we know that these types of infrastructure investment are a critical development tool. Municipalities use these funds to make their downtowns safe, pedestrian-friendly places where businesses and people want to be.

New Jersey's cities and towns will lose out unless this funding is restored. We urge the state's Congressional delegation to stand up for these important safety programs.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit advocacy and policy organization working for a more sustainable transportation network in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Visit www.tstc.org.