

Mr. Speaker, today, Congressman **MARK FOLEY** and I are introducing legislation to extend commuter benefits to bicyclists. This important legislation includes bicycles in the definition of transportation covered by the qualified transportation fringe benefit.

Currently, employers may offer a Transportation Fringe Benefit to their employees for commuting to work. Employees who take advantage of this program may receive a tax exemption benefit totaling \$200 for participating in qualified parking plans or \$105 for transit or van-pool expenses. Employees may also opt to take cash compensation instead, which is subject to employment taxes. The Bike Commuter Act would extend these same Transportation Fringe Benefits to employees who choose to commute by bicycle, eliminating the disincentive for this alternative mode of transportation.

It's time to level the playing field for bicycle commuters. Bicycling is one of the cleanest, healthiest, most energy-efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation that exist today. Nearly 500,000 Americans already ride their bicycles to work on a daily basis, and 52 percent of Americans want to bike more than they do. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, bicycles are second only to cars as a preferred mode of transportation, demonstrating their significant potential for commuter use. Many Americans own one or more bicycles, but limit their use to recreational purposes. At a time when communities across the country are seeking to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, increase the safety of their neighborhoods, and decrease petroleum dependence, bicycles offer a wonderful alternative to driving for the more than 50 percent of the working population who commute five miles or less to work. In addition, since the adoption of ISTEA in 1991, Federal spending on bicycle facilities and infrastructure has increased dramatically, contributing to a significant improvement in the bicycling environment in a variety of communities.

This legislation is an important step in making the Federal Government a better partner for more livable communities. The Federal Government should further support these goals by providing transportation benefits to people who choose to commute in a healthy, environmental, efficient and neighborhood-friendly fashion.