

WASHINGTON, DC – A new pilot program designed by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D – Ore) has been included into the final version of H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The initiative, called “Conserve By Bike,” establishes within the Department of Transportation a program to oversee up to 10 pilot projects across the country designed to conserve energy resources by providing education and marketing tools to convert car trips to bike trips.

“Bicycling is one of the cleanest, healthiest, most efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation that exist today,” Blumenauer said in support of his amendment. “Bicycling, as an alternative to automobile travel, can be an important element of a comprehensive energy conservation strategy.”

Included in the bill was a \$6.2 million authorization for the program. The initiative would also encourage partnerships between stakeholders from transportation, law enforcement, education, public health, environment, and energy fields. Project results and energy savings must be documented, and the Secretary of Transportation is instructed to report to Congress on the results of the pilot program within two years of implementation.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives approved the legislation, and the Senate followed suit this afternoon. It is widely expected that the President will sign the legislation in the coming days.

Already, 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. This increase in bike use has been caused in recent years by significant upgrades to the bicycling infrastructure in communities across the country. At a time when these communities are seeking to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, increase the safety of their neighborhoods, and decrease petroleum dependence, bicycles offer a relatively simple, energy-saving alternative to driving.

“It is time we talk seriously about transportation alternatives as an important component to a comprehensive energy conservation strategy,” Blumenauer said. “The Conserve by Bike Program is a critical step in that direction.”