

Washington, D.C. — Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) today urged the House Appropriations Committee to restore funding for the Transportation Enhancements program, the primary source of federal funding for bike and pedestrian facilities. Earlier this month, the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation zeroed out funding for the program in the fiscal year 2004 Transportation Appropriations bill.

"The Transportation Enhancements program has undeniably been one of the most successful elements of federal transportation spending over the past decade," Blumenauer said in his letter to the House Appropriations Committee. "The record demonstrates only broad and deep support among governors, mayors, county officials, and the public for this program."

The Transportation Enhancements program was established in 1991 as part of ISTEA and expanded in TEA-21, and has funded almost 17,000 projects. Nationally there are over 1 million daily commuters and nearly 57 million people who report regular bicycling activities. According to a recent poll, over half of Americans want to bike more than they do now. Currently, less than one percent of all transportation funds spent each year are directed toward bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Yet bicycling and walking account for at least 7 percent of trips and 13.3 percent of traffic fatalities.

"Transportation Enhancements are a vital element to meeting the full range of our nation's transportation priorities," continued Blumenauer. "Its impacts are tangible and far-reaching, and removing this funding will affect thousands of communities and millions of people."

A copy of Blumenauer's letter to the House Appropriations Committee follows:

July 23, 2003

Dear Chairman Young, Chairman Istook, Ranking Member Obey, and Ranking Member Olver:

I am writing to you as the Co-Chair of the Congressional Bike Caucus to ask that the House Committee on Appropriations restore funding for Transportation Enhancements. This program, which was established in 1991 as part of ISTEA and expanded in TEA-21, has provided \$2.42

billion to states and communities for 16,699 projects. Its impacts are tangible and far-reaching, and removing this funding will affect thousands of communities and millions of people. Nationally there are over 1 million daily commuters and nearly 57 million people who report regular bicycling activities. According to a recent poll, over half of Americans want to bike more than they do now. Currently, less than one percent of all transportation funds spent each year are directed toward bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Yet bicycling and walking account for at least 7 percent of trips and 13.3 percent of traffic fatalities.

Transportation Enhancement funds may be used for twelve types of projects, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, bicycle and pedestrian safety and education activities, conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails, landscaping and scenic beautification, and scenic or historic highway programs, including tourist and welcome centers. These programs aid in providing more personal transportation choices for all people, including bicyclists, pedestrians, people with disabilities, and all travelers. The benefits of these Enhancements are not always immediately obvious. For example, highway landscaping and scenic beautification programs very often result in reduced highway maintenance costs because the new landscaping doesn't require regular mowing.

There are numerous examples of Transportation Enhancements that have reduced congestion, including the 47-mile Pinellas Trail project, running from Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg, FL, which approximately 60,000 people use each month for commuting or destination trips. This translates to 60,000 trips each month not taken by car – an obvious reduction in road usage and congestion for the region. There are hundreds of other success stories.

The proposed Committee report implies that all enhancement funds are used only for “roadway landscaping, transportation museums, and renovation of historic places.” In fact, since its inception, 45 percent of Enhancement funds have been spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities and 9 percent on conversion of abandoned rails to trails. The Federal Highway Administration maintains a website describing the program in detail at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te.htm>, and a clearinghouse of enhancement projects at <http://www.enhancements.org>.

The Transportation Enhancements program has undeniably been one of the most successful elements of federal transportation spending over the past decade. The Subcommittee's action directly contradicts the many hearings of the authorizing committees on TEA-21 renewal

where the record demonstrates only broad and deep support among governors, mayors, county officials, and the public for this program. The successes and value of the Transportation Enhancements program led the Bush administration to recommend full funding for FY04, as well as requesting the program's full continuation as part of its SAFETEA recommendation.

Transportation Enhancement programs are not merely "nice to have," as the proposed committee report states; instead they are a vital element to meeting the full range of our nation's transportation priorities. When the full Committee on Appropriations meets to consider the Transportation Appropriation bill, I strongly encourage you to restore funding for Transportation Enhancements by removing Section 114 of the Subcommittee's recommended Transportation Appropriation bill, and removing the paragraph labeled "Ineffective use of transportation funding" on pages 70-71 of the draft Committee report.