

Washington, D.C. — Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) joined Congressman Jim Oberstar (D-Minn.) yesterday to introduce legislation which would help communities to build safe environments in which people can walk or bike. The legislation, the “Pedestrian and Cyclist Equity Act,” (PACE) would authorize funds to create “Safe Routes to School” programs that would build safer environments for students to walk or bike to and from school.

“It takes money and dedication to make our roads and sidewalks safer for our children,” Blumenauer said. “This important legislation will provide the valuable resources necessary to help our communities become safer places for children as they walk or bike to school.”

PACE authorizes \$250 million per year in grants to fix unsafe road conditions near schools, either by building infrastructure such as sidewalks and bike paths or by hiring crossing guards and creating traffic safety programs. \$25 million is authorized annually in PACE to develop walkable and bikeable communities throughout the nation. The bill also authorizes \$225 million over six years for three demonstration projects based on these walkable community plans.

According to a recent survey by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, nearly 70 percent of today’s parents walked or biked to school, while only 18 percent of their children do today. Because of this, more and more adults are forced to spend time driving children to and from school or other destinations.

Inactivity, combined with obesity, is a growing problem in America, and it is estimated that the health costs to American society of obesity surpass \$100 billion per year. This proposal, in encouraging communities to become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly, would also encourage communities to promote physical activity.

“This bill encourages children and adults to reacquaint themselves with the joys of human-powered transportation,” Oberstar said. Oberstar is the top-ranking Democrat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

The bill is expected to be inserted into the reauthorization of a major transportation funding bill, which will be considered in Congress later this year.