Rep. Doris Matsui Introduces Complete Streets Legislation

Bill Will Increase Options for Travel, Make Roads Accessible to Cyclists and Pedestrians

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) introduced the Safe and Complete Streets Act of 2008 to make the nation's roadways accessible to alternate modes of transportation. Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access to motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and riders of public transit.

"Once again, gas prices have hit record highs this week. As American families continue to feel the pain at the pump due to the skyrocketing costs of gasoline, they are driving less and less. By diversifying our roadways, we can provide real alternatives to travel by car," said Rep. Matsui.

The Safe and Complete Streets Act would require states that receive federal funding for their road improvement projects to implement complete streets policies. These policies ensure that any new road construction or rehabilitation efforts would accommodate the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system.

The bill does not try to establish a one-size-fits-all policy. Instead, it accounts for variation from one locale to the next by requiring the projects to fit within the local community context.

It also provides for clearly-established guidelines wherein a single project could be exempted from the complete streets guidelines, such as cases of the cost of implementing them would be prohibitive.

"We have very real challenges facing our country, and they are all interwoven. We now know that we must change our environmental and energy policy, and reduce our impact on the planet.
By opening up our roadways to pedestrians and cyclists, we can help ease the congestion on our nation's roads," said Rep. Matsui.

The benefits of complete streets principles are well-documented and broad in scope. Complete streets:

- help increase the capacity of the transportation network by giving people more choices about how they travel
- are cost-effective infrastructure investments, and help avoid costly retrofits
- improve pedestrian safety for the nearly one-third of Americans who do not drive
- encourage healthy and active lifestyles
- fight climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging people to drive less

"We cannot continue our current course, placing undue burdens on our infrastructure and environment. We must take innovative steps to change how we live our daily lives, and ensure that we hand over a sustainable planet to the next generation," said Rep. Matsui.

The Safe and Complete Streets Act enjoys broad support:

"AARP greatly appreciates Representative Matsui's leadership in introducing Complete Streets legislation. Complete streets are safer and more user-friendly for everyone and help people of all ages and abilities stay safely connected to their communities."

- David Sloane, Senior Vice President of AARP

"The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is extremely grateful that Rep Matsui has introduced complete streets legislation. This bill will increase safety on our nation's roads for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists, and will help children, who are among the most vulnerable roadway users."

- Deb Hubsmith, Director of Safe Routes to School National Partnership

"Complete streets will help people shift short auto trips to walking and bicycling, and that's essential for reducing pollution and carbon emissions. We're very pleased to be working with Congresswoman Matsui on this legislation, and we appreciate her leadership on this important public health issue."

- Larry Greene, Executive Director of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Managemen t District

"We commend Rep. Matsui for recognizing the importance of making the best investment possible with our federal transportation dollars. States and cities across the country have discovered that completing their streets for all users means safer communities that invite walking, bicycling, and taking transit - and that can help people cope with the rising price of gasoline."

- Barbara McCann, Coordinator of the National Complete Streets Coalition

The Safe and Complete Streets Act is supported by:

AARP, America Bikes, America Walks, American Planning Association, American Public Transportation Association, American Society of Landscape Architects, Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, Breathe California, California Park and Recreation Society, California WIC Association, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Easter Seals, Friends of the Earth, League of American Bicyclists, Local Government Commission, National Center for Bicycling and Walking, National Recreation and Parks Association, Prevention Institute, Reconnecting America, Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates, Safe Kids Greater Sacramento, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, Smart Growth America, Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, Thunderhead Alliance, Transportation Alliance, Transportation Equity Network, Transport Worker's Union, Transportation and Land Use Coalition, Trust for America's Health,

WALKSacramento, YMCA of the USA

###