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U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE INTRODUCE BILL TO MAKE STREETS SAFER AND ENCOURAGE HEALTHIER AMERICA

To reduce accidents, legislation will create 'Complete Streets' to keep motorists, transit vehicles, pedestrian and bicyclists, safe as well as encourage healthy alternatives to automobile travel Washington, D.C. — U.S. Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA) and U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced The Complete Streets Act of 2009, which would work to promote the design of streets that are safe for all of those using the street— including motorists, bus riders, pedestrians and bicyclists, and people with disabilities. Between 1996 and 2006, approximately 54,500 pedestrians and more than 8,000 bicyclists were killed in road accidents; studies show that designing streets with pedestrians in mind reduces pedestrian risk.

“When Americans choose to leave their car at home and walk or ride a bike to school or work, they are making a healthy decision. We need to ensure streets, intersections and trails are designed to make them easier to use and maximize their safety,” said Harkin. “This legislation will encourage Americans to be more active, while also providing more travel options and cutting down on traffic congestion.”

“By diversifying our roadways, we can provide real alternatives to travel by car. The strength of this legislation is that it recognizes that we face very real challenges today, many of which are interwoven,” said Matsui. “By opening up our roadways to pedestrians and cyclists, we can help ease the congestion on our nation’s roads. In doing so, we will make progress fighting air pollution and global warming, and we will take strides toward improving the health and protecting the safety of people across our country.”

The Urban Land Institute has estimated that carbon emissions from transportation would be 41 percent above today’s levels in 2030 if driving is not curbed, and a recent study by the Texas Transportation Institute found that providing more travel options, including public transportation, bicycling and walking, is an important element in reducing traffic congestion. The study reported that congestion was responsible for an annual \$78 billion loss in fuel during traffic jams in 2007, an increase from \$57.6 billion in 2000.

Another study found that 43 percent of people with access to a safe place to walk, within 10 minutes of their home, met recommended daily activity levels. At the same time, only 27 percent of those without access to safe walking options were active enough.

The Complete Streets Act of 2009 has been endorsed by: AARP, US Conference of Mayors, America Bikes, American Planning Association, Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, Transportation For America, League of American Bicyclists, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, YMCA of the USA, National Association of Realtors, American

Planning Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, American Council of the Blind, Paralyzed Veterans of America, America Walks, Active Transportation Alliance, Smart Growth America, Trust for Americas Health, and the American Public Health Association.

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