



**House Transportation Committee
Hearing on Senate Bill 1
June 17, 2013**

The American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association (AHA) thanks Chairman Hess, Chairman McGeehan and members of the House Transportation Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony providing the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association's position on Senate Bill 1 specifically, and transportation funding as a whole.

The AHA supports a comprehensive transportation funding plan that takes into account ALL modes of transportation – including walking and bicycling – with a dedicated portion of funding to support walking and bicycling initiatives.

For over two years, the AHA has been an active participant in the Keystone Transportation funding coalition and, most recently, Walk and Ride PA (www.walkandridepa.org), an initiative to expand Pennsylvania's walking and biking pathways to improve the commonwealth's economy, environment, public health and roadway safety. The reason for this is because integrating health objectives within transportation and community planning creates more active communities, more balanced transportation systems and a cost-effective opportunity to improve public health.¹

Unfortunately, we've built a society that relies too much on cars to take us from one place to another, in addition to television, technology and video games to preoccupy our time. As a result, too many people lead sedentary lifestyles, putting them at roughly twice the risk of having heart attacks, heart surgeries, strokes or other cardiovascular events compared to those who are more active.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 65% of Pennsylvania adults² and almost 16% of adolescents³ are overweight. What's worse is that over 55% of Pennsylvania adults⁴ and over 70% of adolescents² do not achieve recommended levels of physical activity per day.

¹Litman, T. Integrating public health objectives in transportation decision-making. *American Journal of Public Health Promotion*. 2003 Sep-Oct; 18(1):103-8.

² CDC. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: Prevalence and Trend Data—Overweight and Obesity, U.S. Obesity Trends, Trends by State 2010. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

³ CDC, Division of Adolescent and School Health. The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>

⁴ CDC. *MMWR* September 2010 State-Specific Trends in Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Among Adults United States, 2000–2009. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm5935.pdf>



In light of these statistics, Pennsylvania must find ways to increase physical activity opportunities and recreational spaces where people live, work, learn and play. Investing in walking and bicycling initiatives – such as Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets policies – as part of larger transportation projects can deliver accessible and safe pathways for adults and children alike to get daily physical activity that is so desperately needed.

Several studies have found that the way communities are designed and developed can have an effect on ready access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities. There is even a correlation with higher rates of obesity. Safe sidewalks, green spaces, parks, public transportation, and ready access to fruits and vegetables lower the risk for developing diabetes and other chronic disease as compared with those communities that do not have these resources.⁵

Other studies have found that building bike/pedestrian trails reduces health care costs associated with physical inactivity. For every dollar invested in building these trails, nearly \$3 in medical cost savings may be achieved.⁶

Senate Bill 1, Printer's Number 1162 not only recognizes walking and bicycling as separate modes of transportation; it also includes \$2 million in dedicated funding for walking and bicycling facilities, in addition to the ability to compete for additional funding to support walking and bicycling initiatives through funding from the Multi Modal Fund.

In order to combat the obesity epidemic and save our children from being the first generation not to outlive their parents, Pennsylvania must look at common sense and cost-effective approaches that are readily accessible in our everyday lives to address the obesity epidemic. Senate Bill 1, Printer's Number 1162 is one solution that will better equip communities with resources for planning and implementing accessible and safe walking and biking facilities to promote increased physical activity throughout communities.

Submitted by Jen Ebersole, Pennsylvania Government Relations Director

⁵ Auchincloss, A. H., A. V. Diez Roux, et al., Neighborhood resources for physical activity and healthy foods and incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus: the Multi-Ethnic study of Atherosclerosis. *Arch Intern Med.* 2009; 169(18): 1698-704.

⁶ Wang, G., C. A. Macera, et al. (2005). "A cost-benefit analysis of physical activity using bike/pedestrian trails." *Health Promotion Practice.* 6(2): 174-9.