OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

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Building Infrastructure to Create Safe Routes to School and Revitalize School Yards and Playgrounds

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this economic stimulus program is to provide states and localities with the fiscal resources necessary to create the local infrastructure to improve child safety and provide opportunity for physical activity in and around schools across the country. Proposed projects include refurbishing school yards and playgrounds to support school-based physical activity and creating bike lanes and appropriate pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., install sidewalks, crosswalks, and implement traffic calming solutions) on both new and existing roadways around schools to promote safe and physically active transportation choices for students. **Such strategic investments are expected to result in the creation of approximately 7,000 jobs (estimated $500,000,000 in new jobs) and important improvements in the physical infrastructure in and around 2,500 schools across all 50 states within two years.**

The proposed plan will:

- **Create thousands of new jobs in multiple sectors through the stimulus of new public works projects** including refurbishing school yards and playgrounds, creating sidewalks and bike lanes on existing roads and new construction, and building other traffic calming measures.
- **Create safer neighborhoods and school yards to reduce pedestrian injury rates and improve school playground safety especially targeting schools serving low-income communities.** With pedestrian injury being the 2nd leading cause of injury-related death among children ages 5-14 and school playgrounds receiving a C+ for safety, building safe infrastructures in and around schools encourages parents and children to walk and play. [1-3]
- **Create local environments that supports the health of students and community residents** since children who walk or bike to school and play in re-designed school yards are more physically active thereby reducing their risk factors for obesity and other chronic diseases.[3,5,6]
- **Improve academic performance of students** through increased physical activity which help children have better academic achievement and when breaks for physical activity are provided, like at recess, may help improve concentration skills and classroom behavior.[10]
- **Reduce air pollution around schools by reducing the number of cars that drop children off.** One-third of schools are in "air pollution danger zones," and schools that are designed so children can walk and bicycle have measurably better air quality.[11,12]
- **Improve social capital by fostering a sense of community connectedness** though the creation of safe, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods and playgrounds that all residents have access to[9].

Two Recommended Changes to Authorized Programs

1. Safe Routes to School: $100 million for immediate projects, $500 million additionally over 2 years.

***200 projects can start in 90-120 days.* 1000 more projects can be completed in 2 years.**

Established in August 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, Section 1404) includes an allocation to schools and communities to compete for funding to build local SRTS projects that improve safety, connectivity, and accessibility. Currently funded at $612 million dollars from FY2005 –FY2009, states have already allocated 80% of available funds. There is a demonstrated need for additional funding given that nearly three times as many applications were received over the amount

funded. All 50 states and the District were required to hire SRTS Coordinators and develop application guidelines prior to releasing funds; thus, the capacity for quick program implementation is already in place.

Recommendations:

- **Immediately release $100 million for 200 SRTS Ready to Go Projects** so they can begin construction in 90-120 days. **Distribute an additional $500 million in "Rapid Response SRTS" funding to the states for 1,000 projects,** requiring states to select schools for implementation and utilize state-wide or regional design/build contractors to plan SRTS improvements, obtain clearances, and carry out construction, ensuring completion within two years. These funds would:
    - Generate hundreds of millions of dollars of new business for engineering and construction firms, agricultural and landscaping businesses, and the purchase of millions of dollars worth of construction materials.
    - Improve safety, connectivity to the community and neighborhoods, and accessibility to approximately 1,200 schools.
    - Create safer roads for students including high-visibility crosswalks, raised intersections, and flashing school-zone beacons and signs.
    - Redesign school campuses to encourage walking and bicycling through separation of children from buses and cars and sheltered bike racks.

2. Carol E. White PEP grant: $100 million over 2 years.

1000 projects can be completed in 2 years.

Established in *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (*ESEA*), as amended, Title V, Part D, Secs. 5501–5507; 20 *U.S.C.* 7261–7261f. The Carol M. White Physical Education Program provides grants to local education agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) to initiate, expand, or enhance physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Recommendations:

- Distribute $100 million in additional grants focused on improving safety of the school's outdoor physical activity infrastructure, equipment (both portable and built), and play space. These funds would:
    - Generate millions of dollars of new business for engineering and construction firms, agricultural and landscaping businesses, and the purchase of millions of dollars worth of playground and and construction equipment.
    - Add new and replace old playground materials, hoops, and other built equipment.
    - Rehabilitate schools yards to offer more green space, improve and create new courts and other paved areas for free play and movement, and create walking paths or trails, etc. to encourage more physical activity.
    - Purchase portable equipment to help children become more physically active.
    - Support efforts of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers which legislates opening the school to the community and students after school hours.
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