

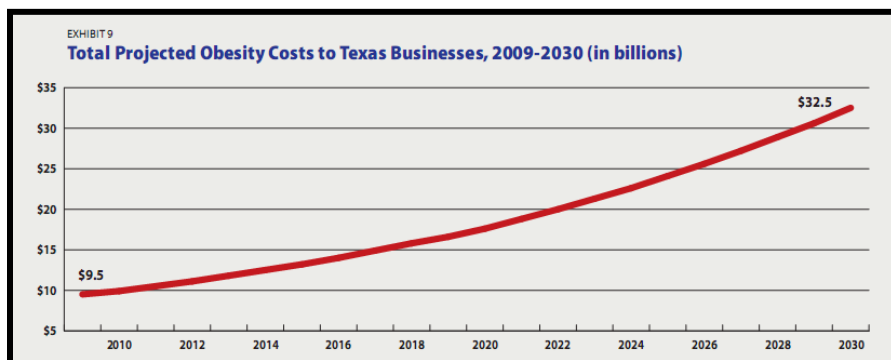


Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland Security Hearing
April 13th, 2011
SB 513: Complete Streets

Hello Members, I am Lauren Dimitry, Health Policy Coordinator at Texans Care for Children. At Texans Care for Children, we look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners and 147 members throughout the state who together represent hundreds of thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda.

The evidence suggests that many Texas children are growing up in places with barriers to good health. A study by the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston found among Texas fourth-graders, 42% are overweight,ⁱ and so are nearly as many eighth- and eleventh-graders (39% and 36%, respectively). Research published in 2010 found that Texas also has one of the nation's highest rates of adolescent *obesity*—excess weight that brings the most health risks—and that no state has a higher rate than Texas of obesity among 10- to 17-year-old girls.ⁱⁱ Even the youngest children face obesity risks: 16% of low-income Texan preschoolers (ages 2-5) are either overweight or obese.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many doctors believe that addressing childhood obesity is key to reversing obesity trends in the population at large—and, economists say, states and businesses need such a reversal to avoid dire costs. Because so many overweight children grow up to be overweight or obese adults, if no action is taken, 43% of working-age Texans will be *obese* within three decades.^{iv} The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts says this increase will cost Texas businesses over \$30 billion by 2030. Type II Diabetes, an obesity-related illness, today accounts for about 9% of all spending by Texas Medicaid, the largest single health and human services budget item, but that spending could more than double by the year 2030, reaching \$1.5 billion per year.^v Obesity is linked to many other chronic diseases that shorten the life span, from high blood pressure to heart disease to cancer, and demographers now forecast that, should obesity remain on its current trajectory, today's children will be the first generation in centuries to live shorter lives than their parents.^{vi}



Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Texas and other places have proven that changing the public environment can directly improve children's health. For example, places where teens feel safe walking, biking, or getting outside experience significantly lower rates of youth obesity, even when other factors, like income, are taken into account.^{vii} Programs like Safe Routes to School, which helps ensure there are sidewalks and other safe passageways, have significantly increased weekly physical activity levels among children, according to a 2005.^{viii} Complete streets—roads designed for safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists—also promote health. The National Institutes of Medicine recommends legislation that promotes sidewalks, bikeways, and other features of complete streets as a strategy to fight child obesity.^{ix}

In states where people cannot walk or bicycle safely, because there are no sidewalks or bike lanes less activity occurs and higher rates of obesity and diabetes prevail.^x SB 513 would address this issue by requiring that Complete streets be

considered when new roads are constructed, or when roads are redone, with state and federal dollars. SB 513 is a positive and proactive approach to solving this problem by building roads that promote a healthy, active Texas. By supporting SB 513 this committee can help make our communities safer and more accessible to cyclists and pedestrians, and further help reduce the growing costs and consequences related to obesity in Texas.

Thank you for your time and commitment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the staff of Texans Care for Children at 512.473.2274.

Respectfully,

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ⁱ Hoelscher D.M., Perez A., Lee E.S., Sanders J., Kelder S.H., Day R.S., Ward J. School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) III Survey, 2004-2005. UT School of Public Health, Houston.

ⁱⁱ Singh, G.K., Kogam, M.D., and vanDyck, P.C. Changes in State-Specific Childhood Obesity and Overweight Prevalence in the United States from 2003 to 2007. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*. Vol. 164, No. 7. May 3, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of State Health Services, "Texas Overweight and Obesity Statistics," with February 2007 data from the Texas WIC Program: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/obesity/NPAOPdata.shtm>

^{iv} "Findings About the Obesity Epidemic in Texas." Methodist Healthcare Ministries. January 2009. <http://www.mhm.org/advocacy/pdf/Keyfindingsobesity12609.pdf>.

^v Texas Department of Human Services. "The Impact of Diabetes on Aging Texas Well: Costs of Medicaid Long-Term Care Attributable to Diabetes." February, 2002. http://gmweb.dads.state.tx.us/Reports/ltc_diabetes.pdf

^{vi} Belleck, P. "Children's Life Expectancy Being Cut Short by Obesity." *The New York Times*. March 17, 2005.

^{vii} Slater, S.J., Ewing, R., Powell, L.M., Chaloupka, F.J., Johnston, L.D., and O'Malley, P.M. "The Association between Community Physical Activity Settings and Youth Physical Activity, Obesity, and Body Mass Index." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, June 2010.

^{viii} McMillan, T.E. "Research Brief: Walking and Biking to School, Physical Activity and Health Outcomes." Active Living Research. (2009). http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Brief_ActiveTransport.pdf

^{ix} Bike Texas. "Complete Streets." Adapted from the National Complete Streets Coalition. Austin, 2010.

^x Pucher, J., Buehler, R., Bassett, D.R., and Dannenberg, A.L. "Walking and Cycling to Health: A Comparative Analysis of City, State, and International Data." *American Journal of Public Health*, August 2010.