The Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK) is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with the common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. OAK’s members are brought together by the belief that the wellness of current and future generations, the health of our planet and communities and the economy of the future depend on humans having a personal, direct and life-long relationship with nature and the outdoors.

OAK’s public policy framework rests on three pillars: education, community health and wellness and environmental stewardship. OAK supports the following legislation:

**Education: No Child Left Inside Act [H.R. 2702; S. 1306]**

OAK supports initiatives that provide children and youth with opportunities to learn about — and in — the great outdoors. The No Child Left Inside Act would create incentives for states to implement environmental literacy plans for K-12 public school students. This bill would create new funding for: 1) training teachers in environmental education; 2) for expanding environmental education programs; and 3) for states to implement environmental literacy plans, which will ensure that U.S. graduates are environmentally literate.

**Community Health and Wellness: Healthy Kids Outdoors Act [H.R. 4706; S. 2367]**

OAK supports initiatives and infrastructure that increase access and opportunity to engage in healthy, safe, and affordable outdoor places, networks and programs that will ultimately improve the health of individuals and the broader community. The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act would improve our children’s health, support economic growth and strengthen the future of conservation by reconnecting our children, youth and families with the natural world through innovative state strategies that connect communities with green spaces, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and engage the health community in educating caregivers about the benefits of active time outdoors. The legislation provides state-level incentives for agencies and partners across sectors to develop comprehensive 5-year state strategies.

**Environmental Stewardship: The Public Lands Service Corps Act [H.R. 1351; S. 360]**

OAK supports initiatives and funding that provide young people with jobs, training, service, and volunteer opportunities that connect them to the outdoors and recreational opportunities. The Public Lands Service Corps Act would expand the authorities of the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and give authority to the Secretary of Commerce to establish service opportunities for youth and young adults on public lands. The legislation would help the public land and water management agencies to meet our nation’s backlogged maintenance needs, address record youth unemployment, and prepare a diverse group of youth to be the next generation of natural resource employees.
In July 2012, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, or MAP-21. This law funded transportation programs at more than $105 billion for FY2013 and FY2014.

MAP-21 also consolidated a number of walking and biking programs – including the Safe Routes to School and Recreational Trails Program – into a newly created Transportation Alternatives Program. In addition, MAP-21 significantly reduced the annual funding for these programs by approximately one-third, or from $1.2 billion to just over $800 million. MAP-21 also made trail, walking, and biking projects compete with other eligible uses for these fewer federal dollars.

Nearly three-out-of-four adolescents do not currently get the recommended amount of aerobic exercise and strength training each week and studies have also found that building bike and 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.

**Why Congress Should Support Active Transportation Options**

All Americans, particularly children, youth, and those who have no other independent means of mobility should have access to transportation options that are safe, accessible, connected to parks and public lands, and promote physical activities such as biking and walking. Supporting these goals when designing transportation infrastructure is critical to creating more livable and active communities, and improving public health.

**OAK’s Position on MAP-21**

MAP-21 is scheduled to expire at the end of May 2015. Reauthorization of MAP-21 provides a critical opportunity to strengthen our investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Specifically, OAK supports a reauthorization that:

- **Maintains funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).** TAP provides vital funding for infrastructure projects for walking and biking that improve public health. Adequately investing in TAP, and preventing further cuts, is essential to ensuring states and communities can provide safe and accessible active transportation options for all their citizens.

- **Provides more control of TAP funding to local communities.** In addition to consolidating non-motorized programs, MAP-21 also changed how funds for these programs are distributed. The law allows states to transfer 50 percent of overall TAP funding for use on any transportation project – including projects that do not support walking, biking, or recreation infrastructure. Local communities, when given a choice, are more likely to support investments in walking, biking and recreation.

- **Allows an 80/20 match across all TAP projects instead of to each individual project.** Current law requires each individual transportation project to have an 80/20 match in funding --preventing many low-income neighborhoods that lack access to resources from participating in TAP. Spreading the 80/20 requirement across all projects would ensure that these types of projects are funded.

To further support the reauthorization positions, OAK supports the following legislation:

- **Safe Streets Act** [H.R. 2468 and S. 2004] The Safe Streets Act would ensure that all streets are designed, planned, and built with all users in mind. The bill provides guidelines for a complete streets policy, provides states flexibility to design the policy at the local level, and ensures that all modes of transportation are considered in planning and design, including: walking, biking, and public transit. The bill does NOT require any new or additional federal spending and enjoys bi-partisan support among House and Senate co-sponsors.

- **New Opportunities for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Financing Act** [H.R. 3978]. This measure takes steps to advance equity for bicyclists and pedestrians by offering a new tool for mayors and local governments to finance needed walking and biking transportation infrastructure through the popular transportation financing program known as TIFIA. The bill does not add any new costs and requires at least 25 percent of funds to be spent in low-income communities. H.R. 3978 also enjoys solid bi-partisan support in the House of Representatives.