

Active Transportation Alliance

Questionnaire

This survey, which has been distributed to all Congressional candidates in your district, is meant to help educate our members and the general public impartially and on a nonpartisan basis about the policy positions of candidates for Congress. All views are welcome. Please fill out this form and return it by August 3 to barb@activetrans.org.

Please note: Each answer field has a limit of 350 characters (approximately 70 words).

Name of Candidate: **Sean Casten**

State and District: **Illinois 6th Congressional District**

1. The 116th Congress will start work on the next surface transportation reauthorization. What are your transportation priorities?

We must work to repair our roads and bridges, and I have publicly called for an increase in the gas tax if necessary to fund. We should also recognize that our rail system is too often held to a different standard than our highways, insofar as it is expected to cover all it's costs while highways are treated only as an expense. This has misallocated our infrastructure dollars and should be rectified. And we should not neglect providing sufficient funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with a focus on safety.

2. The Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which funds highway and transit projects, is funded through excise taxes on transportation related goods, the largest being taxes on gas and diesel. These fuel taxes were last increased in 1993, and have not kept pace with inflation and transportation costs. Under the current FAST Act, Congress moved \$72 billion from the general fund to the HTF for five years. What are your views on the HTF and federal funding of transportation?

We are long overdue for an increase in the gasoline tax, to ensure that the Highway Trust Fund has the resources it needs to keep up with regular repair, let alone make new infrastructure investments. Furthermore, it is my view that Congress' failure to ensure that the gas tax keeps up with inflation calls into question Congress' fiscal responsibility. I would therefore like to see that tax permanently indexed to an appropriate inflation rate so that the revenue for infrastructure maintenance keeps pace with the expense associated with same.

3. Right now, 20 percent of Highway Trust Fund (HTF) dollars go to the transit fund, and 80 percent go to Highways fund. One to two percent of funding is devoted to bicycling and walking, which comes out of the Highway fund. What is your position on these funding allocations?

I have not researched this allocation, but would welcome the opportunity to learn more.

4. Last year, over 40,000 people lost their lives on our roadways. Over 16 percent of those fatalities were bicyclists and pedestrians. What role, if any, should the federal government play in roadway safety?

In the summer of 1988, as a 16 year-old boy, I rode my bike across the country; so I appreciate the importance of safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. The prior summer I had ridden my bicycle across Europe. While both trips were wonderful and life-changing, it was notable how different we were treated in Western Europe, where it was taken for granted that bicyclists had the right-of-way on public thoroughfares. I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about the cause of that difference and what if any regulatory tools can be applied to make US roads safer for cyclists & pedestrians.

5. The Center for Disease Control reports that physical activity maintains health, reduces the risk of developing obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases, reduces feelings of depression and may also improve academic performance. What, if any, role should the federal government have in encouraging Americans to engage in physical activities?

While it would not be appropriate to legislate physical activity, the federal government can provide funding for appropriate infrastructure that supports such activity and fits with other smart growth plans. Local and regional government agencies should play a key role in identifying appropriate projects that benefits local residents.

6. Under the Clean Air Act, Congress requires the Environmental Protection agency to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards for contaminants such as carbon monoxide (CO), particulate matter (PM) and ozone (O3). Carbon dioxide (CO2) Is not covered. What, if any, role should the federal government play in regulating carbon dioxide?

The Clean Air Act has done wonders to clean the air. However, it is structured in ways that too often increase CO2 emissions, but virtue of mandates to install energy-inefficient pollution control equipment. These mandates unintentionally increase CO2 emissions, but can be fixed. For more details on how to do so, see my thoughts here:
<https://castenforcongress.com/blog/issue/our-environment/>

7. What role do bicycling, walking and public transit play in the transportation system in your district?

Many thousands of families rely on train service to Chicago for their jobs. We need to give our transit agencies more resources so that they can serve our population better with safe, frequent, on-time service. Speaking personally as a cyclist who makes regular use of the Prairie Path, Fox River trails, I&M Canal and Cal-Sag trails (to name just a few) I consider it a privilege to have access to safe, bicycle friendly routes and would love to see them expanded to cover more of the district and state.