

**AMERICA WALKS**  
***Strategic Campaign Plan 2011 - 2013***  
*A Campaign Plan to coordinate and invigorate walking in America*

**DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Foreword**

**Mission Statement**

The mission of America Walks is a walkable America. Working collaboratively, we share knowledge, advance policies and implement effective campaigns to promote safe, convenient and accessible walking conditions for all.

**Vision Statement for a Walkable America**

By 2020, walking in everyday life is embraced across America. Streets and neighborhoods are safe and attractive public places that encourage people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and incomes to walk for exercise, recreation, and transportation. Walkable community policies promote health, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

**Principles for a Walkable America**

The following principles are key to achieving our vision of a walkable America:

1. Transportation systems will provide accessibility and mobility for all
2. People of all abilities will be able to safely walk along and to cross all streets
3. Communities of all sizes will be designed on a human scale, to encourage social interaction and commerce
4. States and cities will revise existing transportation and development policies, standards, and programs to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use
5. Transportation and development design decisions will explicitly consider public health outcomes

**America Walks.**

Walking is the first and most fundamental form of transportation, the most basic form of physical activity and the most popular form of outdoor recreation. Walking as transportation leads to healthier people, vibrant economies, and environmental sustainability.

Over the past fifty years, however, our nation has systematically engineered walking out of daily life. In 1969 walking made up 40 percent of all transportation trips, but in 2008 walking trips decreased to 11 percent<sup>i</sup>. Existing cities and new sprawling communities have become laced with massive high-speed roadways, unsuitable and even life threatening for the most ambitious person trying to walk to a destination; in the past fifteen years 76,000 people have been killed walking. Correspondingly, physical activity has declined, bringing about skyrocketing obesity rates and the attendant killer diseases. The associated healthcare costs resulting from sedentary lifestyles cost American taxpayers, business owners, and individuals was \$147 billion in 2006<sup>ii</sup>, and could rise to \$344 billion by 2018 if trends continue<sup>iii</sup>.

To shift this paradigm we need a broad-based, focused voice for to fund and initiate national and local actions to improve walking in America. To fill this need, America Walks is joined by diverse

organizations committed to making America more walkable. Some of these partners have been instrumental increasing funding for ‘Active Transportation’ – bicycling and walking – from 0.1% in FY 1992<sup>iv</sup> to 2.1% of the federal transportation program in FY 2010<sup>v</sup>. Others have more recently begun building momentum as part of the national ecosystem of organizations pushing for transportation reform or local actions. America Walks will specifically unify the growing number of diverse organizations under the banner of walking, one element that everyone truly has in common in getting around every day. Walking can be a common thread that to advance new flexible funding programs, federal walking and bicycling programs and policies, and walkable communities throughout the nation.

American communities have rediscovered the benefits of walkability. People are concerned about local safety and speeding on their residential streets, and they are seeking options to congested roadways. Recent analysis found that both commercial and residential real estate bring higher rents and sale values when located in areas with a high “walk score.” Cities large and small are retooling commercial districts to add pedestrian plazas and safer pedestrian crossings, rebuilding main streets to bring residents back and attract money from visitors. Walking will reduce the nation’s health epidemic: it is an activity that every person, of any ethnicity, income or physical ability can enjoy given safe and convenient conditions.

America Walks is proud to present our new strategic direction and plan to accomplish ambitious goals. Our organizational structure is retooled to focus on building a diverse and powerful coalition that advances and defends walking nationally and initiates game-changing local campaigns with resident organizations and individuals. We hope to enlist you as an ally in advancing and defending walking in your community, business, organization, or area of impact. Please sign the Vision Statement for a Walkable America, contribute financially, and/or take part in our committee work.

Yours truly,

Mindy Craig  
President of the Board of Directors

## **Executive Summary**

America Walks is a national, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization fostering walkability in America by building a diverse and powerful coalition to be a strong voice to advance and defend walking at the national level. America Walks also advances game-changing campaigns with national and local partner organizations, serving as a coordinator, information clearinghouse, and resource provider.

Pedestrian advocacy leaders founded America Walks in 1995 as a coalition of local groups dedicated to promoting walkable communities. Over the past fifteen years, however, only a limited number of pedestrian-only advocacy organizations have successfully staffed up and the America Walks membership has modestly increased to twenty-six organizations. Simultaneously, many other organizations have begun to integrate walking into their missions, including bicycle, youth, health, aging, business, development, equity, social justice, smart growth, and environmental groups.

In early 2010 the America Walks Board of Directors, partnering with the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), shifted focus by launching the Equal Footing Campaign, to ambitiously advocate for walking in America. The Campaign assembled a powerful Steering Committee of diverse organizations, businesses and individuals; it concluded<sup>1</sup> that America lacked an organization or coalition providing a strong voice for walking and needs one. The Committee developed this national walking strategy to provide the framework for that work.

America Walks is transformed, with a new mission, vision, and organizational structure. In September 2010 the Board of Directors voted to shift from a “membership” organization to a “coalition” one, to vastly broaden the tent for the types of organizations that would join the cause; today we have over 70 organizational partners with a goal of 500 by the end of 2011.

Steering Committee membership in 2010 and lined up for 2011 includes: AARP, American Heart Association, Rails to Trails Conservancy, America Public Transportation Association, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, National Associations of Realtors, APBP, the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking, and the National Complete Streets Coalition.

This strategic campaign plan provides the goals, objectives, and tactics on transitioning America Walks from an organization primarily supporting local walking advocacy to collaborating with a wide array of interests to advance and defend walking nationally. The report is broken into three strategic focus areas:

- 1. Create a National Unified Voice for Pedestrians**

America Walks coordinates a unified voice for walking, working with our powerful Steering Committee and growing list of partners to advance a common agenda and campaigns. By 2012 we will have 500 organizations and 50,000 individuals endorse the Vision for a Walkable America.

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<sup>1</sup> In reaching this conclusion, the Steering Committee engaged people through on-line surveys, interviews, and the Equal Footing Summit; both soliciting feedback and building energy to advance a national walking movement.

**2. Advance and Defend National Walking Policies, Infrastructure, and Programs**

America Walks will complete a unified federal walking policy platform and push to have it adopted into transportation and other relevant federal legislation and agency work. We will acquire funding to hire Washington D.C. based campaign staff and coordinate with partners to integrate walking into their policy platforms.

**3. Advance Community-based Campaigns that Restore Walkability throughout America...**

a. Reducing Speeds in America / Community Speed-free Zones. Speed kills. Less known is that auto speeds are a primary barrier for children, families, and aging Americans to walk out their door to get to school, work, shopping, or transit. We will launch a major campaign to reduce speeds to 20 mph in communities throughout America. America Walks will serve as a clearinghouse and technical service provider, partnering with state and local organizations to implement projects in their communities.

b. Access to transit and jobs, focused on aging adults, low-income, and people with disabilities.

Access to transit means access to equitable, reliable, and cost-effective transportation to get to work and essential destinations. Three quarters of all transit trips start with a walking one. Breaking down barriers to walking to/from transit serves both riders and providers. America Walks will start eliminating barriers by focusing on research and data collection and data dissemination around this key issue as it works with partners to define the needs and most cost effective means to address them.

Goals and tactics are provided for each of the strategic focus areas. This three-year campaign plan outlines an ambitious yet realistic set of goals, objectives and tactics to take us to the next level. America Walks believes that progress in each of these areas will lead to more walkable communities and thus an increase in walking. We look forward to working with and growing our partners to advance these essential goals.

## **Focus Area #1 - Create a National Unified Voice for Pedestrians**

### ***Background***

America Walks, a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit organization, was founded in 1996 by four local pedestrian advocacy organizations to provide information and support for local pedestrian advocates, including individuals, non-profits and city staff. America Walks organized the “National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates” each year from 2001 to 2004. In 2005-2006, six regional conferences were held. Thereafter, the organization focused on disseminating information primarily via email and website. On-line resources include the *Toolbox for Pedestrian Advocates*; America Walks Policy Positions; monthly SR2S webinars, monthly newsletter, and email list serve.

In early 2010 the America Walks Board of Directors shifted the organizational focus to advance walking at the national and local levels via a partnership model. With the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), we launched the Equal Footing Campaign to develop a National Walking Strategy. In the process we assembled a Steering Committee and blue-ribbon Advisory group to participate in building a national walking movement. We talked to over 100 people and organizations, framing the conversations with a few basic questions, starting with:

1. *Is there a unified national walking movement in the U.S.?*

We found the answer to be unanimously “no”, no organization is focused exclusively on walking and developing national campaigns that solely advance and defend walking.

2. *Does there need to be one?*

The large majority said “yes”. An important number of respondents expressed concerns that the partners avoid duplications and overlapping, especially on the programmatic side.

The Equal Footing Summit in Chattanooga, Tennessee on September 16, 2010 was a powerful event that will help shape the future of walking in America. Over 100 people and organizations attended. Summit participants, among other things, reached a clear consensus that America needs a unified voice for walkability and walking, and endorsed America Walks to fill this void.

### ***Tactics***

#### **1.1 Institutionalize the National Walking Coalition**

The Equal Footing Campaign launched a national walking coalition by increasing the involvement and investment of partner organizations. Ongoing, this

### ***Long-Term Goal***

People champion walking as an essential part of daily living and organizations add walkability to their missions as they advocate at every level of government. Together we are unified in pushing for policy changes to improve the built and social environment, thus ensuring that all people can walk as part of their everyday lives.

### ***Measurable Objectives***

- America Walks maintains an active Steering Committee of 25 diverse and influential national, regional and local organizations to set direction and ensure a unified voice for walking nationally.
- America Walks coordinates advocacy on pedestrian issues at the national level and serves as the voice of pedestrians in partnership with organizations working on major transportation reform and in policy discussions.
- Increase number of partner organizations that sign on the Vision for a Walkable America from 70 to 500 by 2012; 25,000 individuals sign onto the Vision by June 30, 2011 and 50,000 individuals by 2012.
- By 2013, identify and partner with 10 organizations or events that prioritize walking as a key tactic to meeting their policy platform or programmatic objectives.

coalition will be structured using the following principles:

- Organizations, individuals, and businesses join the coalition by signing on to the Vision for a Walkable America;
- An ongoing Steering Committee consisting of key member organizations, invited by the America Walks Board of Directors, set strategic policy and programmatic direction; Steering Committee members will be expected to provide resources to support the coalition;
- Board of Directors, with the Executive Director, facilitates and implements the work of the Steering Committee; and
- Communication between America Walks and its partners takes two forms:
  - Directly with individuals who endorse the Vision for a Walkable America through the America Walks website, Facebook and twitter, newsletter articles, and email action alerts.
  - Organizational partners mobilize their networks and related general public.

### ***Steering Committee roles***

The Steering Committee meets regularly, with committees meeting as needed to:

- Develop a national walking policy platform and translate its elements into campaigns;
- Respond to legislative proposals and administrative actions;
- Develop strategies and tactics for key programmatic campaigns; and
- Fundraise for the partnership work and identify new opportunities.

### 1.2 Build Resources to Accomplish Goals

It is urgent that America Walks assemble the resources in order to open a D.C.-based office in order to be active in transportation-related deliberations. We are currently fundraising to open an office in 2011. Our estimated formula for financing this goal includes seeking funds from a diverse set of sources, including corporate sponsors, Steering Committee members, individuals, and other sources.

### 1.3 Partner Organizations include walking to their missions.

America Walks will work to serve as a clearinghouse, thus facilitating and amplifying communication. By coordinating messages, cataloguing walking information distributed, and tracking campaigns underway and as they are launched, it will strengthen partner groups and encourage other organizations to seriously tackle the issue of walkability.

### 1.4 Partner on key events that unify walking

America Walks will partner on events and opportunities to build support and energy to advance walking. Initially this will be through integrating walking more fully into the existing events and professional gatherings of other organizations.

## **Focus Area #2 - Advance and Defend National Walking Policies, Infrastructure, and Programs**

### ***Background***

Issues of national importance require robust representation to both advance and defend the interest. Walkability and walking form an issue that fundamentally impacts the way that Americans live, our basic health, equity, social justice, the environment, economy and more.

America Walks believes that we can build a very broad and focused coalition that successfully advocates for active and healthy transportation policies and programs in America. We are able to learn from a host of powerful coalitions successfully advancing similar issues. These include: Transportation for America, America Bikes, National Complete Streets Coalition, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, and the National Physical Activity Plan coalition. A few, including the Safe Routes to School National Partnership and National Complete Streets Coalition cover walking extensively, but none focuses exclusively on walkability and covers the full range of issues that ensure a healthy walking environment in America.

A key issue in successfully advancing and defending walking through a coalition will be to avoid duplication and work to insert walking into the other coalitions so that walking becomes fundamental to a multitude of organizations, from a variety of perspectives.

### ***Tactics***

#### **2.1 Establish an office in Washington D.C.**

America Walks will move the national office from Alexandria, VA to Washington, D.C. and hire staff to direct the office, serve as the daily liaison to national Steering Committee organizations, and lead the national advocacy efforts. Explore options to co-locate with other walking and bicycling organizations. First task is secure adequate funding and proceed with operational issues.

### ***Long-Term Goal***

National policies, programs and expenditures prioritize walking as a cost-effective, healthy, and equitable form of travel that promotes the economic well-being and long-term viability of a community

### ***Measureable Objectives***

- Open a D.C. based office in 2011 with the goal of advancing and defending walking and walkability at the federal government level. Employ 1.0 FTE equivalent at start of 2012, 2.0 FTE by June 2013, and increase to 3.0 FTE by 2015.
- Work with partners to defend supportive existing federal policies, to ensure that no existing pedestrian rights and programs are removed.
- Develop a national pedestrian advocacy platform by June 2011. Advance the platform in transportation and other federal bills and inside relevant agencies. Measureable objectives include passage of partner policies federal funding that goes to walkability in America, DOT and agency policy changes, and changes to professional manuals that positively advance walking, such as with the Highway Design Manual, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and Uniform Traffic Code.

## 2.2 Develop a Policy platform for reauthorization and beyond

The Equal Footing Steering Committee will create a federal policy committee to craft the policy platform to be known as the National Walking Strategy. The platform will create a position for the reauthorization for the transportation bill and related bills. Working in the context of the transportation reform debate led by Transportation for America, and supporting policy bills including the Active Transportation Act, Complete Streets, and Safe Routes to School. The America Walks Board of Directors retains authority to adopt the final policy platform. Each partnering organization retains authority to adopt the National Walking Strategy in part or in whole for itself.

## 2.3 Advance walking in federal transportation and policy debate

America Walks will ensure that walking is part of the dialogue among partner organizations, organizations that may not be active partners, and at congressional levels. We will respond to and seize opportunities from legislative proposals that impact walking in America, will promote the issuance of high-level policy statement, such as that made by Secretary LaHood in 2010, that reflects our vision for walking as a priority in America. We will build strong working relationships with federal agencies that include DOT, EPA, HUD, HHS-CDC-NIH, and influence them to make walking part of their key initiatives to advance a healthy, sustainable, just and efficient America.

America Walks will also work to ensure walking is integrated into the legislative agenda of both partner and other organizations. Examples may be include ensuring that Transportation for America reform debate continues to highlight the importance of walking, or seeking that less traditional organizations, such as the Y-USA and senior, equity, environmental and health organizations add walking to their legislative agendas.

## **Focus Area #3 – Advance Community-based Campaigns that Restore Walkability in America**

### **Background**

The last fifty years of American urban and suburban development and policies have emphasized the fast paced movement of automobiles, separation of destinations and ignoring opportunities for active living. However increasingly people and institutions are engaging community-based development patterns and transportation policies to provide a full range of options.

Making communities walkable is an element in drastically improving the litany of health and environmental issues facing America today. Local community leaders, businesses and citizenry frequently want community design that is accessible, safe and attractive to all. A growing number of programs support improved walking. Building on that opportunity, America Walks has identified key community-based campaigns that have current local champions but no national organization to coordinate, cross evaluate, or systematically share the information to other communities, they are:

- 3.1. *Community-based speed reduction*
- 3.2. *Access to transit and jobs*
- 3.3. *Access for aging adults, people with disabilities and low-income populations*

America Walks will work in selected communities nationwide to pilot test innovative campaigns aimed at improving walking policies, conditions and behaviors. Campaigns will be researched, focused for maximum impact, and laid out by the Steering Committee. These will employ community-based campaign models that have proven effective in making change. In each community, America Walks will work with an array of partners to achieve measurable improvements in walkability.

### **Tactics**

#### **3.1 Launch Community-based Speed Reduction Campaign**

Speeding is a problem across the United States. Each year, more than 15,000 people die in speed-related crashes, and 80,000 people are seriously injured. Because of the dire safety impacts, motor vehicle speed restricts people's ability to walk or use non-automotive transportation, hampering their ability to reach otherwise walkable destinations for those that most need to walk – children, aging adults, disabled adults, and those residing in low-income communities.

### **Long-Term Goal**

Walking in everyday life is embraced across America and federal policies and actions ensure that streets and neighborhoods are safe and attractive places that encourage people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities, and incomes to walk for exercise, recreation and transportation.

### **Measurable Objectives**

- In 2011 we establish a community-based speed reduction clearinghouse and engage five communities to partner on campaigns aimed to change policies, engineering, and community awareness. By 2013 we will measure the impact of campaigns in improving roadway safety and usability for non-motorized users.
- By 2013 publish at least one research paper outlining issues, solutions, and benefits to improving access between transit, jobs, and neighborhoods by walking.
- By 2013 complete a study of the best-practices of data collection techniques and efforts to improve transit and pedestrian connectivity and service levels. Include a focus on job access and aging in place.

Reducing automobile speeds is a key ingredient to achieving significant gains in both walking and bicycling as transportation modes in America. While research is needed to fully understand the issue, many lessons that are ready to be compiled in a clearinghouse format, including European examples of successful district-wide 20 mph or 30 KM zones that have both increased walking and bicycling and reduced all traffic injuries and fatalities. Work has also occurred or is developing in the US, including in Columbia, MO, New York City and Portland, Oregon. These disjointed, underreported efforts need national support and information sharing, and new efforts need incubating.

America Walks will work with major funders and local communities to develop comprehensive approaches to changing public perception, policy, and infrastructure to reduce automobile speeds. Components of the campaign will include:

- Research – a more complete understanding of urban speed management techniques and methods needed to implement area-wide low-speed zones;
- Clearinghouse –provide on-line and customer-based training to compile best practices and disseminate research;
- Community pilot programs –initiate five community based campaigns to test methods and results; support dissemination of local stories and findings; and
- Advocacy – conduct federal advocacy and support statewide and local legislative and administrative changes with model ordinances, case studies, and technical assistance.

### 3.2. Access to Transit, Jobs and Key Locations

We will work to provide people with access to jobs and to key destinations and links, with a strong focus on safe walking to transit for seniors, people with disabilities and low-income populations., .

Activities to increase access to transit may include:

- Literature review and background data analysis of the issue; Conduct more intensive; outreach/research among the target populations to fully understand the issues;
- Originate research relating to health, safety, economic, and other transit access issues; and
- Identify best-practices, analytic tools, and funding to increase walking access.

### 3.3 Access for aging adults, people with disabilities, and low-income populations

Aging adults, people with disabilities, and low income people are populations with restricted access to privately owned motor vehicles to reach their destinations. The aging population and people with disabilities need non-automotive mobility to successfully age in place. Low-income people also need access to jobs, stores, schools, and the myriad destinations that fill lives. Transit is very important to each, as is the ability to safely and attractively access transit on foot. While the experience of these groups on transit has been studied, there has been less focus on the factors, other than distance from a transit stop, that affect their ability to use public transportation. Infrastructure, perceptions of safety at various hours of the day and night, law enforcement, lighting and other elements need to be understood to secure the most cost effective investments. America Walks is working to better understand these issues and build strong partnerships to disseminate and use information to advance best practices. Once factors affecting access to transit for walkers are better understood, a campaign can be launched in selected communities to implement the findings. Results of these will be evaluated, outcomes published and additional actions taken.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090727.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/weightloss/2009-11-17-future-obesity-costs\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/weightloss/2009-11-17-future-obesity-costs_N.htm)

<sup>iv</sup> Estimated from graph is *The National Bicycling and Walking Study: 15-Year Status Report, May 2010*, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.

<sup>v</sup> Compiled by America Bikes, FHWA's total obligations for FY2010 according to FMIS.