

AMERICA WALKS
Strategic Campaign Plan 2011 - 2013
A Campaign Plan to Make America a Great Place to Walk

Adopted December 2010

Foreword

Mission Statement

The mission of America Walks is to make America a great place for walking by working collaboratively to 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 transportation, exercise, and recreation. Walkable community policies promote health, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

Principles for a Walkable America

Walkability is defined by the following key principles:

1. People of all abilities can safely walk and move along and across all streets in their communities.
2. Communities of all sizes are designed so that most people can walk comfortably to places where they work, study, shop, play, and pray.
3. States, counties, and cities revise existing transportation and development policies, standards, and programs to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.
4. Transportation and development design decisions explicitly consider public health outcomes.

America Walks.

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

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 trips, but in 2008 walking trips decreased to 11 percentⁱ. Massive high-speed roadways divide existing cities and new sprawling suburban communities, making it difficult and even life threatening for the most ambitious person to walk to a destination. In the past fifteen years 76,000 people have been struck by automobiles and killed while walking; the costs caused by automobile-pedestrian crashes is \$10 billion annuallyⁱⁱ. Correspondingly, overall physical activity has declined, contributing to skyrocketing obesity rates and the attendant chronic diseases. Obesity and sedentary lifestyles cost American taxpayers, business owners, and individuals \$147 billion in 2006ⁱⁱⁱ, and could rise to \$344 billion by 2018 if trends continue^{iv}.

To shift this paradigm America Walks needs a broad-based, yet consistent voice to advocate for increased funding, better policies, and local actions to create walkable communities 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 to increasing funding for 'active transportation' – bicycling and walking – from 0.1% of the federal transportation program in fiscal year (FY) 1992^v to 2.1% in FY 2010^{vi}.

Others have more recently begun building momentum as part of the national movement of organizations pushing for transportation reform and supportive local actions. America Walks will unify the growing number of diverse organizations under the banner of walking and pedestrian accessibility, the element that every person has in common as we move through our daily lives. Walking is a universal thread to promote new, flexible, funding streams for transportation, health and land use.

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 alleviate 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, a common walkability measure.^{vii} Further, surveys show a strong demand for walkable housing, yet there exists a massive undersupply of housing in walkable areas.^{viii} In response to these demands, 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. Communities seek to have the baby boomer generation “age in place,” which requires walkable neighborhoods with easy access to stores and other destinations.. Walking is an activity that every person, of any ethnicity, income or physical ability can enjoy given safe and convenient conditions. It is within our grasp to create those conditions that support walking.

America Walks is proud to present our new strategic direction and plan to accomplish ambitious goals. We retooled our organizational structure to focus on building a diverse and powerful coalition that advances and protects walking nationally and that initiates game-changing local campaigns with neighborhood organizations and individuals. America Walks hopes to enlist you as an ally in advancing and protecting walking in your community, business, organization, or area of impact. Please take the first steps by signing the Vision Statement for a Walkable America and making a financial contribution to support our work.

Yours truly,

Mindy Craig
President of the Board of Directors, 2010

Carter Headrick
President of the Board of Directors, 2011

Executive Summary

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

Pedestrian advocacy leaders founded America Walks in 1996 as a coalition of local groups dedicated to promoting walkable communities. Over the past fifteen years a limited number of local pedestrian-only advocacy organizations have thrived, modestly increasing America Walks membership 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, in partnership with the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), shifted focus by launching the Equal Footing Campaign. The Campaign assembled a powerful Steering Committee of organizations, businesses and individuals; it concluded that America needed an organization or coalition to provide a strong voice for walking.¹ The Committee developed this strategic plan to provide the framework for that work.

This plan contains the new mission, vision, and organizational structure of America Walks. The organization made a critical shift from a “membership” organization to a “coalition” in order to vastly broaden the umbrella under which diverse organizations could assemble.

Our campaign plan provides the goals, objectives, and tactics for the direction of America Walks. 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 Steering Committee and partners to advance a common agenda and campaigns. By 2012 America Walks will have 500 organizations and 50,000 individuals endorse the Vision for a Walkable America.

- 2. Advance and Protect National Walking Policies, Infrastructure, and Programs**

America Walks will develop a comprehensive federal walking policy platform and advocate for its incorporation into federal transportation policy and other relevant federal legislation and agency work. We will raise funds for a Washington, D.C.-based campaign that will 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 vehicle speeds prevent children, families, and aging Americans from walking out their doors to get to school, work, shopping, or transit. America Walks will launch a major campaign to reduce speeds to 20 mph in communities throughout America. America Walks will serve as a clearinghouse and technical assistance provider, partnering with state and local organizations to implement projects in their communities.

¹ The Steering Committee includes the following organizations: 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.

- b. Transit access to jobs and for aging adults, people with disabilities and low-income populations. 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 trip. 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. We will work with partners to define the needs and most cost effective means to address those needs.

Goals and tactics are provided for each of the strategic focus areas. This three-year plan outlines an ambitious yet realistic set of goals, objectives and tactics to make America Walks effective at the national and regional levels. 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 expanding our partnerships to advance these essential goals.

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

Background

America Walks has worked for fifteen years providing information and support for local pedestrian advocates. 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 Safe Routes to Schools webinars, monthly newsletter, and email list-serve.

In early 2010 America Walks launched the Equal Footing Campaign to develop a National Walking Strategy. In the process we assembled a Steering Committee and our expert advisory board 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 protect walking.

2. *Does there need to be one?*

The large majority said “yes.” A substantial number of respondents recommended that America Walks avoid duplication and overlapping work, 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 reached a clear consensus that America needs a unified voice for walkability and walking, and put their support behind America Walks to fill this void.

Tactics

1.1 Institutionalize the National Walking Coalition

The Equal Footing Summit established a national walking coalition by increasing the involvement and investment of partner organizations. Going forward, this coalition will be structured using the following principles:

- Organizations, individuals, and businesses will join the coalition by signing on to the Vision for a Walkable America;
- The Steering Committee will consist of key member organizations, invited by the America Walks Board of Directors, and set strategic policy and programmatic direction; Steering Committee members will be expected to provide resources to support the coalition;

Long-Term Goal

To ensure that all people can walk as part of their everyday lives, people and organizations are unified in championing walking at every level of government.

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.
- Number of partner organizations that sign the Vision for a Walkable America increases from 85 to 500 by 2012; 25,000 individuals endorse the Vision by June 30, 2011 and 50,000 individuals by June 30, 2012.
- By 2013, America Walks will identify and partner with 10 organizations that prioritize walking as a key tactic to meeting their policy platform and integrate walking into their policy events or programs.

- The 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 will mobilize their networks and related general public.

Steering Committee Charge

The Steering Committee meets regularly, along with sub-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 coalition work and identify new partnership opportunities.

1.2 Build Resources to Accomplish Goals

It is urgent that America Walks assemble the resources for a D.C.-based office and become active in transportation-related policy and funding. We are currently fundraising to open an office in 2011. Our 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 serve as a clearinghouse to coordinate messages around walking and track innovative and effective campaign strategies that improve walking. This information and coordinated communication program will strengthen partner organizations and encourage others to seriously address walking conditions as a key element to their success.

1.4 Partner on key events that advance walking

America Walks will partner with organizations to build support and energy to advance walking. Initially this will be through integrating walkability policy into their events and professional gatherings.

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

Background

Walkability is 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 diverse coalition focused on creating 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, American Public Health Association, National Complete Streets Coalition, and Safe Routes to School National Partnership. A few partners work on 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 protecting walking through use of a coalition will be to avoid duplication of efforts. We will work to insert walking into the platforms of 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 to Washington, D.C. and hire staff to direct the office to staff the national Steering Committee and lead the national walking advocacy efforts. We will explore options to share office space with other walking and bicycling organizations. The first step will be to secure adequate funding.

Long-Term Goal

National policies, programs and expenditures prioritize walking as a cost-effective, healthy, and equitable form of travel which concurrently 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 protecting walking and walkability at the federal government level. Employ: 1.0 FTE equivalent in 2011; 2.0 FTE by June 2012; and 3.0 FTE by end of 2013.
- America Walks coordinates advocacy on pedestrian issues at the national level, on major transportation reform and in policy discussions, and to protect existing federal policies, ensuring that no existing pedestrian rights and programs are removed.
- Develop a national pedestrian advocacy platform by June 2011. Advance the platform in all federal policy. Measureable objectives include expansion of federal funding for walkable communities, DOT and agency policy changes, and changes to professional manuals that positively advance walking, including the Highway Capacity Manual, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, *Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, and Uniform Traffic Code.

2.2 Develop a policy platform for federal transportation bill reauthorization and beyond

The Steering Committee will create a federal policy sub-committee to craft the coalition's policy platform, which will be known as the National Walking Strategy. The platform will target both legislative and executive branch laws and policies. It will apply to the reauthorization of the transportation bill and other relevant bills and budgets. The platform will strategically advance both the platforms of our partner organizations' and walking specific issues that are not adequately being addressed. These issues may include targeting professional transportation engineering standards, standardizing and increasing data collection, and improving analysis tools such as demand models. The America Walks Board of Directors retains authority to ratify the final policy platform. Each partner 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 coordinate partners and respond to legislative proposals that impact walking in America. We will encourage high-ranking federal officials to issue policy statements that reflect our vision for walking as a priority in America. America Walks will build strong working relationships with federal agencies, including Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Health and Human Services, with the goal of making walking part of their priority initiatives.

America Walks will work to ensure walking is integrated into the legislative agenda of other organizations. For example, we will ensure that the Transportation for America coalition maintains walkability policy as a top advocacy priority. We will also help non-traditional walkability stakeholders, like equity and environmental organizations, see the connections between walkability and their desired policy outcomes. America Walks will provide a distinctive voice for walking and utilize that when possible to achieve the collective goals of partner groups.

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 and efficient movement of automobiles, separation of land uses, while ignoring opportunities for active living. However increasingly people and institutions are merging community-based development patterns and transportation policies to provide a full range of options.

Making communities walkable is an important step towards reversing the health and environmental problems facing America today. Local community leaders, businesses and citizens frequently express desire that community design be accessible, safe and attractive to all. There are a growing number of programs to support walkability. Building on that opportunity, America Walks has identified key community-based campaigns that have current local champions but no national organization assist them to coordinate, evaluate, or systematically share the information with other communities. They include:

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

America Walks will work in selected communities nationwide to test innovative campaigns aimed at improving walking policies, conditions and behaviors. Campaigns will be planned for maximum impact by the Steering Committee. These will employ community-based campaign models that have been 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

Excessive speed of motor vehicles 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 and perception of danger, excessive motor vehicle speed restricts people's ability and desire to walk.

Reducing automobile speeds is a key ingredient to making America more walkable. While research is needed to fully understand the issue, many existing examples should be made available through a clearinghouse, 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^x. Work has also occurred

Long-Term Goal

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 America Walks 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.

or is developing in the US, including in Columbia, MO, New York, NY and Portland, Oregon. These disjointed, underreported efforts need national support and exposure, 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;
- Civic Engagement – initiate community based campaigns in a range of urban, suburban, and rural town settings that will engage citizens and decision makers to address speed reduction. Test methods and results; support dissemination of local stories and findings; and
- Change Standards – conduct federal advocacy and support statewide and local legislative and administrative changes with model ordinances, case studies, and technical assistance. Refine engineering standards, promote speed cameras, and challenge standards that elevate automobile speeds on roadways.
- Increase Resources – publish data and advocate for increases in programs that reduce speeds in all community types.

3.2. Transit access to jobs and for aging adults, people with disabilities and low-income populations

America Walks 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. Aging adults, people with disabilities, and low income people are populations with limited access to privately owned motor vehicles to reach their destinations. Housing options that provide non-motorized connections to important destinations and key services will allow people to live a healthy and economically independent lifestyle. Adults will be able to age in place, low-income families will have affordable access to jobs, stores, schools, and other destinations. Transit is very important to reaching these destinations, as is the ability to safely and attractively walk to transit. 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 ensure the most cost effective investments. America Walks will research these issues and build strong partnerships to disseminate 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.

Activities to increase access to transit may include:

- Literature review and background data analysis of the issue, with emphasis on understanding how it affects target populations;
- Initiate research relating to health, safety, economic, and other transit access issues and its relationship with transit-oriented development and affordable housing; and
- Identify best practices, analytic tools, and funding to increase walking access.

Additional tactics may include:

- Provide training and education for ADA advocates and service providers so that they can ensure safe walking conditions that are already required by law.
- Work with partners to provide travel training of seniors unaccustomed to using transit that improves confidence and understanding of the transit system for increase mobility.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)

ⁱⁱ Incidence and Total Lifetime Costs of Motor Vehicle-Related Fatal and Nonfatal Injury by Road User Type, United States, 2005; CDC.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a926084087&fulltext=713240928>

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

^{iv} http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/weightloss/2009-11-17-future-obesity-costs_N.htm

^v Estimated from graph is *The National Bicycling and Walking Study: 15-Year Status Report, May 2010*, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center.

^{vi} Compiled by America Bikes, FHWA's total obligations for FY2010 according to FMIS.

^{vii} "Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Housing Values in U.S. Cities" by Joseph Cortright, <http://www.ceosforcities.org/work/walkingthewalk>

^{viii} Option of Urbanism, Christopher B. Leinberger, 2009.

^{ix} *The Next Real Estate Boom*, Patrick C. Doherty and Christopher B. Leinberger, 2010.

<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2010/1011.doherty-leinberger.html>

^x Pedestrian and Bicyclists Safety and Mobility in Europe, 2010. International Technology Scanning Program.