

For Immediate Release

Partnership's Goal is to Build a National Walking Strategy and Movement

Alexandria, Virginia (August 9, 2010)

Can we build more walkable communities? [America Walks](#) and the [Association of Bicycle and Pedestrian Professionals](#) (APBP) think so. They want more people and more businesses to participate in the dialogue and action plan development to make America walkable. They are asking basic questions such as what is working and what's not working? To coax more conversation, a [short on-line survey](#) asks for stories, local ideas, and examples that help make walking practical, used for transportation in communities. The [American Heart Association](#) helped make the survey possible.

Survey responses will help guide solutions discussed at [the Equal Footing Summit](#) set for September 16, 2010 in Chattanooga, Tennessee 3:00 – 7:00 pm local time, right after the closing session of the [Pro Walk/Pro Bike® 2010, a conference presented by the National Center for Bicycling & Walking](#).

This timely survey follows distressing footage shown on [PBS's Blueprint for America](#) showing just how dangerous walking can be in an Atlanta; [Ann Arbor](#) was featured in another media story. People across America cannot safely reach basic public services such as the bus stop, especially if they have a disability; people who live at or below the poverty level are also particularly at risk.

Who's Behind the Movement?

America Walks and APBP, partnering with a host of diverse [national and local organizations](#) and experts, are facilitating a new effort called [Equal Footing](#) to increase and coordinate national walking efforts. Together, they are gathering the best ideas for cultivating a culture of walking and walk-friendly policies in America. The goal is a national walking strategy and ultimately, a walking movement. Summit co-chairs are Mindy Craig of [Moore Iacofano Goltsman \(MIG\)](#), Inc, a national planning and design firm, and [Seleta Reynolds of Fehr & Peers](#), a national firm that provides transportation planning and traffic engineering services. Craig is the president of America Walks. Reynolds is the president of APBP.

What are people saying about walking?

Dr. Richard Jackson [Professor and Chair, Environmental Health Sciences at the UCLA School of Public Health](#) and former Director of CDC's National Center for Environmental Health, is a key Advisor to the entire effort. He sees the need for walking to find its voice in America. "Walking is a win, win, win activity that builds stronger bones, a healthier heart, and better endurance and all the while you can walk away pollution and the blues. Walking is health."

Reynolds notes "Studies continue to show [walking premiums in commercial real estate](#) and [home property values](#); walkability can lure tourists, a [\\$700 billion plus tourism industry](#)." With these benefits, it's not surprising that mayors in cities like New York City, Boston, Washington D.C., Chattanooga, and Los Angeles are championing walking environments and great public walking places for residents, employees, and visitors.

Craig points out, "Walkable communities lead to all sorts of community benefit, starting with people walking more. More walking leads to health, happiness and of course shopping."

Equal Footing Effort In Depth

Scott Bricker, America Walks' Campaign Manager and [long-time bicycle and urban livability advocate](#) is convinced that a walking advocacy movement will be different than many of grass roots and bicycle advocacy organizations. "Everyone walks but it doesn't occur to the public to form or join walking advocacy groups. As [Wendy Landman, Director of WalkBoston](#) put it 'right now we are the club that everyone belongs to, so nobody thinks they need to join'." The walking movement can be robust, but will likely form through strategic campaigns and partnerships."

Ray Thomas, with Oregon firm [Swanson, Thomas, and Coon](#), signed on as an early sponsor of the Equal Footing Summit. Thomas is a nationally renowned bicycle legal advocate, with relentless Oregon bicycle leadership dating back to the 1980s. More recently Thomas has taken up the mantle of pedestrian's rights, leading the charge to pass a [Vulnerable Roadway Users law in Oregon](#) (replicated and passed in [New York](#), pending [Governor signature in Delaware](#), and vetoed in [Texas](#)) and published the [Oregon Pedestrian Rights: A Legal Guide for Persons on Foot](#). Thomas wrote [a compelling story recently published in the America Walks newsletter](#) making the case for a national walking movement. Thomas writes "We believe that only by forming a national coalition of pedestrian advocates will we succeed in making the necessary changes to make safe walking a viable option in every city and town. We are excited to see America Walks take an organizational leap to helping pedestrian advocates create a national movement."

Bricker thinks there could be a silver bullet that will help build a robust and financially sustainable national walking movement, "We just haven't found it yet. But effectively, no one opposes walking and I believe that we can muster broad community support for walking. Our work is to develop a national strategy and build the movement. We need to identify the right campaigns and find new visionary supporters, like Ray Thomas," adds America Walks' Bricker.

"Livability is the talk of the town in America. But if a town, city, or neighborhood isn't walkable, it probably isn't very livable either," states APBP executive director Kit Keller. A walkable community is a place where your kids are active, healthy and happy, parents can stop playing chauffeur, and aging seniors can maintain their mobility and enjoy longer and healthier lives. Equally important, walkable communities are more sustainable and economically viable. "It's very good news in challenging financial times that a community's relatively small investment in walking can yield huge returns on investment for the local economy and for the health of the people who live there," Keller adds.

An opportunity for you to participate in the conversation

Organizers of the Equal Footing Summit are now [seeking public commentary on how to improve and grow walking in America through a short on-line survey](#). You can also [register for the Equal Footing Summit](#) set for September 16, 2010 in Chattanooga, Tennessee 3:00 – 7:00 pm local time. The Summit occurs directly following the [Pro Walk/Pro Bike® 2010, presented by the National Center for Bicycling & Walking](#).

About the Conveners

America Walks is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to build a national coalition of organizations, businesses, and individuals to advance walking and walkability in America. APBP is a 501(c)(6) professional association whose members offer expertise for sustainable transportation to help make communities more walkable and bicycle friendly. As conveners, America Walks and APBP will engage other national and regional partners to maximize the Summit's scope and impact.

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