

## USA Equal Footing Summit: Outcomes and next steps

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**Abstract:** Two decades ago, there was little support for bicycling in the U.S. Then, U.S. bicycle advocates, professionals and commercial interests began to work in tandem to actively promote and lobby for advances in policies, programs and projects that benefit bicycling and bicyclists. Efforts like *Bikes Belong* and the *Bicycle Friendly Communities* program brought business support to bicycling.

The premise of the ambitious Equal Footing Summit was simple: Pedestrian advocates, professionals and commercial interests can create similar success by coming together to promote recommended practices, engage communities and develop new markets for pedestrian products. The idea of a Equal Footing Summit was the brainchild of Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) Board member Mary Anne Koos who had participated in a similar summit for bicycling in the early 1990s. Floated in a collaboration conversation with America Walks, support was instantaneous and the boards of both organizations rapidly approved next steps.

Starting with a modest sum of \$15,000 in seed money and strong support from two relatively small national organizations, Campaign Manager Scott Bricker assembled supporters, funders and strategists, and garnered excellent media to ensure solid, ongoing support before, during and after the Summit. Scott's experience in bicycle advocacy and Safe Routes to School work was a key that opened many doors. By building on the success model of bicycle amalgamation, and by emphasizing the known economic benefits of walking for communities, individuals, health care systems, tourism, historic preservation, and more, Scott quickly moved the Equal Footing Summit from theory to practice.

The Summit was timed to coincide with efforts in the U.S. Congress to increase funding and support for active transportation, Safe Routes to School, and sustainable transportation. Early partners included an array of national organizations and commercial interests not previously tapped to support pedestrian safety and mobility. Online and social media strategies were used to reach out to new audiences, create and hone recommended practices and policies, and ensure that the time invested by Summit participants would be wisely used.

In the U.S., more and more bicycle advocacy organizations now include walking in the work they do. This is a good time to collaborate to capture and build on public and business concerns for climate, health and economic sustainability of transportation and other policy priorities.

## Biographies of the authors:

Ellen Vanderslice is an architect who works as a project manager in transportation in Portland, Oregon. She was one of the founders of America Walks and served as its president for seven years. Ms. Vanderslice chaired the host committee for the Walk21 conference in Portland in 2003.

Kit Keller is Executive Director of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. Ms. Keller is a recovering lawyer, trained community organizer, and longtime pedestrian advocate and professional. She lives and works in Cedarburg, Wisconsin.

Scott Bricker is a community and public outreach consultant who currently serves as the Equal Footing Campaign Manager. Mr. Bricker has extensive experience in the Safe Routes to School movement, managing conferences, campaigns and legislative initiatives, and was most recently the Executive Director the Bicycle Transportation Alliance in Portland, Oregon.

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### Slide no. 1

This presentation tells the story of how two national organizations in the U.S. are conspiring to package and sell walking in America and build a national walking movement.



## Slide no. 2

This initiative was inspired by the success of bicycle advocates, professionals and commercial interests who came together a quarter century ago to actively promote and lobby for advances in policies, programs and projects that benefit bicycling and bicyclists. This collaboration eventually resulted in highly effective efforts like Bikes Belong and the Bicycle Friendly Communities program that brought business support to bicycling.



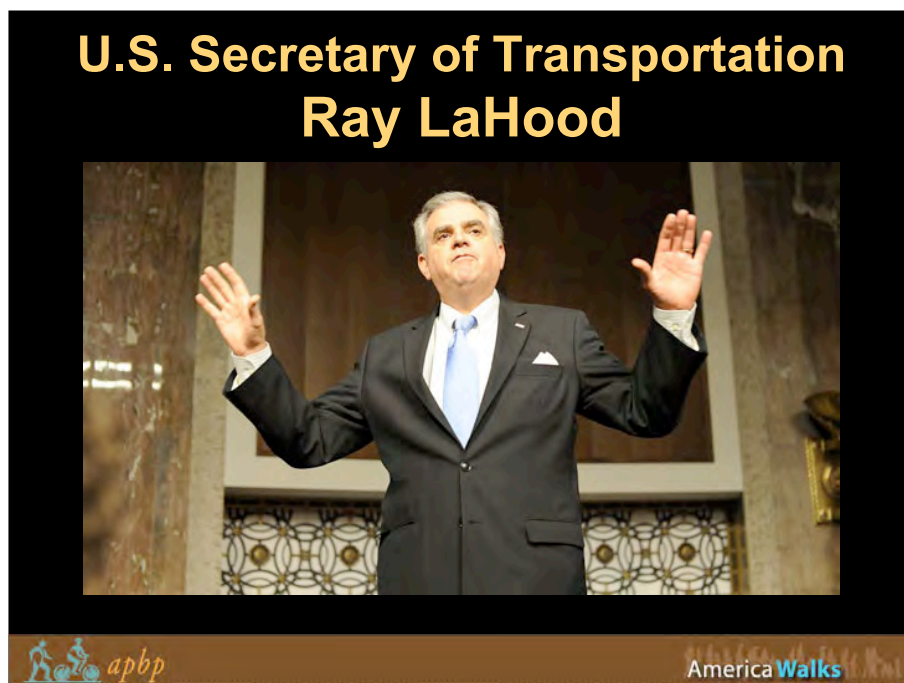
### Slide no. 3

In 2009, the boards of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals and America Walks started a conversation about how these two relatively small national organizations -- one representing pedestrian professionals, the other walking advocates -- could collaborate on a campaign to bring more attention to walking.



### Slide no. 4

The time seemed ripe on several fronts for such a campaign. Work is underway on the reauthorization of our Federal six-year transportation legislation, which has the potential (if properly crafted) to transform communities across the nation.



Slide no. 5

Last March, the mood seemed right, when Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood said, “Today, I want to announce a sea change.... This is the end of favoring motorized transportation at the expense of non-motorized.”

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Slide no. 6

And the brand new development of the Walk Friendly Communities program by the Federal Highway Administration reinforces the notion that the Federal government is taking walking seriously.



### Slide no. 7

The health professions are increasingly turning their attention to the intersection of active living with community design.



Slide no. 8

Consumer demand for livable communities is on the rise, and you can't have livable communities if you don't have walkable communities. From aging baby boomers moving back to the central cities...



### Slide no. 9

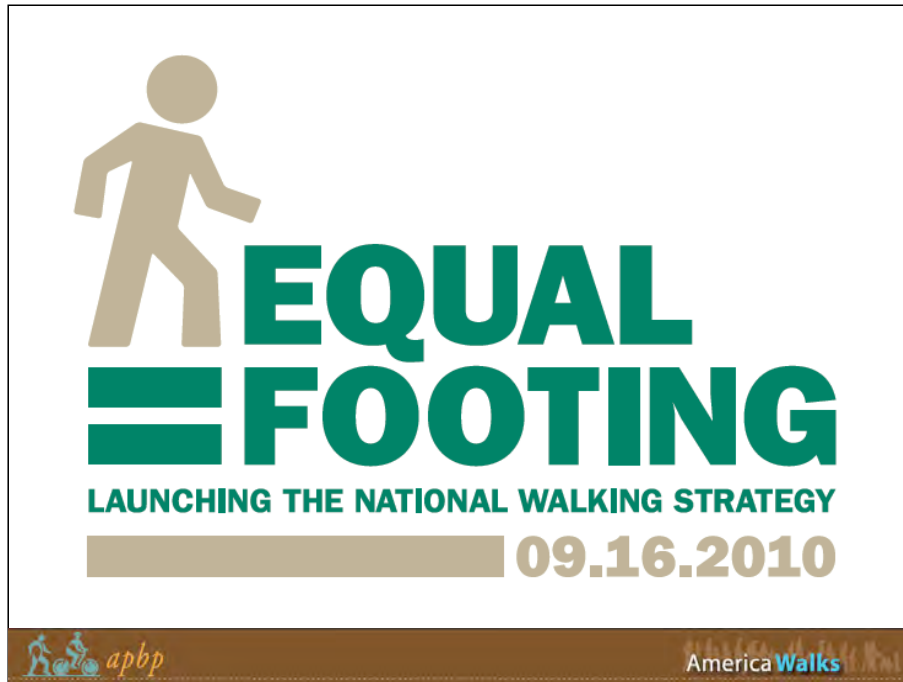
... to the new millenials who increasingly don't bother with a driver's license and flock to hip urban scenes where a car is just a liability, shifting demographics are making walkability an urgent issue.



### Slide no. 10

And, more and more bicycle advocacy organizations in the U.S. now include walking in the work they do, which makes this a good time to collaborate to capture and build on public and business concerns about climate change, healthy communities, and economic sustainability in transportation and infrastructure.

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Slide no. 11

Early in 2010, APBP and America Walks began the months-long process of fleshing out the purpose and logistics of a campaign to develop a national walking strategy. A working name, “Walking Wins,” was scrapped when the effort was more evocatively re-branded as the “Equal Footing” campaign.

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### Slide no. 12

The two organizations formed a large steering committee, chaired by Seleta Reynolds of APBP and Mindy Craig of America Walks, and recruited representatives from several other organizations and bodies who became partners in the effort. They successfully enlisted several contributors and sponsors, and were able to use the modest funding they raised to hire a campaign manager, Scott Bricker, whose expertise in bicycle advocacy and Safe Routes to Schools work was a key that opened many doors.

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### Slide no. 13

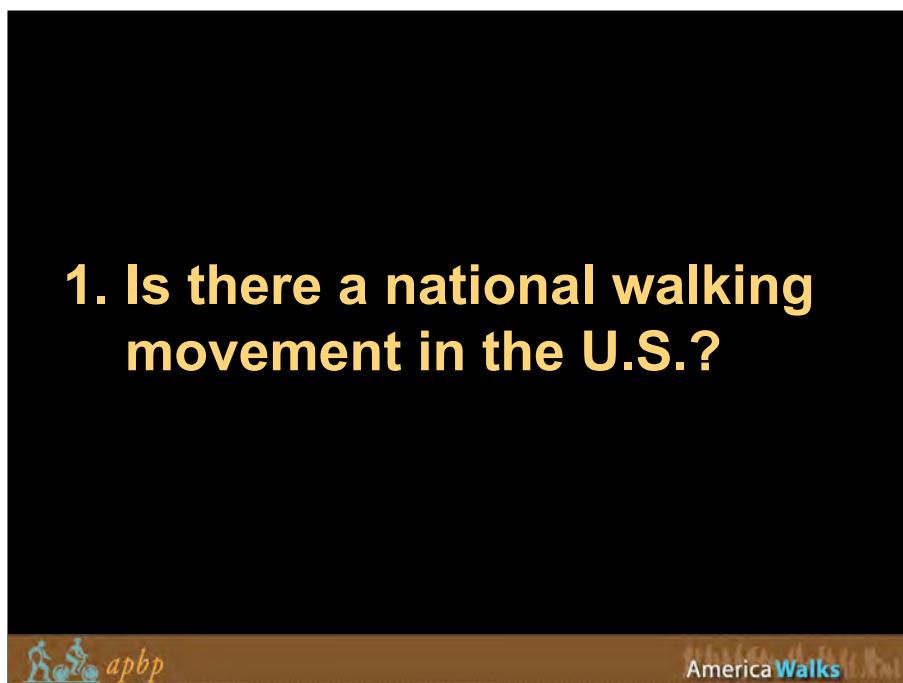
From the beginning, the notion of a national summit was seen as a key step in developing the Equal Footing campaign. The summit was planned in conjunction with the Pro Walk/Pro Bike Conference in September, 2010, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.



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Leading up to the Summit, the campaign team convened a process that included not only the two lead organizations, but drew in partners like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Heart Association, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, Reconnecting America, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking, the Safe Routes to Schools National Partnership, the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking, America Bikes, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, and many others.

To answer a few key questions, the team conducted interviews with more than 35 trusted advisors, key stakeholders and related organizations. They also and crafted a survey, administered on line to more than 250 walking advocates across the country.



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There were three key questions. First, is there a national walking movement in the U.S.?

Our respondents were unanimous: there is no one organization in the U.S. that is leading a national walking advocacy campaign or a national movement focused on walking.



Slide no. 16

So, if there is not a movement, should there be one?

Almost everyone we talked to said yes. No one said no, but some respondents rated this a “maybe,” citing a lack of resources or work on walking in other venues (like the National Physical Activity Plan).



Slide no. 17

If there isn't a focused national walking movement, but there should be one, can America Walks emerge as its leader? Is America Walks the right organization? We determined we would use the Equal Footing campaign to build support and resources so that we can be that organization.

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### Slide no. 18

Two months ago, on September 16, at the end of final day of the Pro Walk/Pro Bike conference, the Equal Footing Summit at last brought together more than a hundred hardy souls for a four-hour marathon to build a national walking strategy. Here, America Walks President Mindy Craig welcomes attendees and lays out the ground rules.

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She rolled out a vision for a walkable America, and asked everyone present to sign on.



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“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.”  
Everyone in the room agreed to adopt this vision.

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### Slide no. 21

I mentioned that the Summit was at the end of the day, and we were all tired! Only one man in America talks (and walks) fast enough to successfully drag a hundred exhausted delegates through the fast-paced exercises the campaign team had laid out: that's Mark Fenton, former Olympic racewalker, a former Board member of America Walks, and host of the television show *America's Walking*.

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### Slide no. 22

The Equal Footing Steering Committee had laid out ten possible strategies for the Summit's consideration, and participants quickly broke into small groups to brainstorm how these strategies might be implemented.

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### Slide no. 23

Everyone then returned to the main hall, where each group reported back, doing their best to sell their particular strategy. Here is APBP President Seleta Reynolds explaining why a campaign to educate decision-makers is a great strategy. Once all groups had presented, each participant then voted on their top three strategies. Five strategies rose to the top, and these are being incorporated into a strategic plan by America Walks.



Slide no. 24

The top strategy was for America Walks to become the unified national voice of walking advocacy.

## Educate decision makers



America **Walks**

### Slide no. 25

The second priority is a national education and awareness campaign targeting decision makers.



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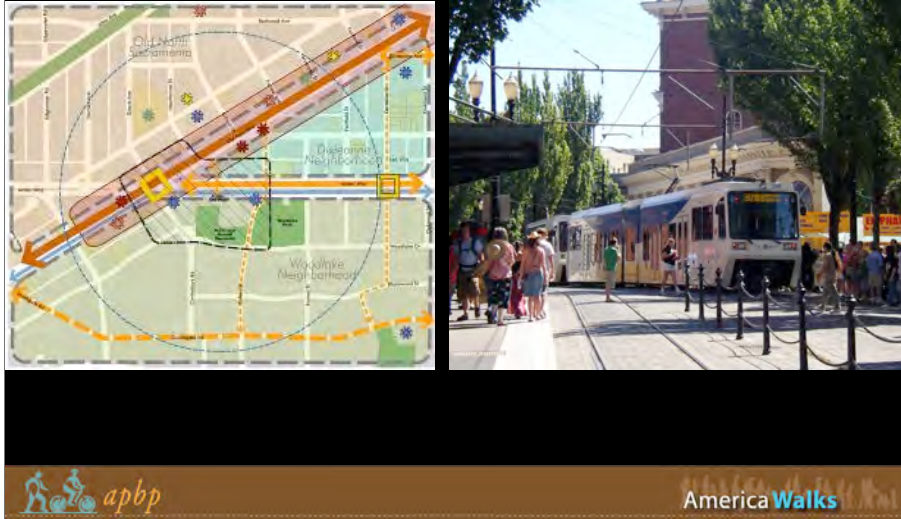
But since all politics is local, it's also necessary to build and empower a national network of local walking advocates. And this, after all, was the grassroots base from which America Walks grew, when it was formed by four local groups in 1996.



Slide no. 27

Two specific campaigns also rose to the top. First, promoting safe routes for seniors, and, just as important...

## Promote safe routes to transit



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... promoting safe routes to transit.



Slide no. 29

As America Walks develops its strategic plan, incorporating the collective wisdom of the Equal Footing Summit, five principles have been articulated as extensions of the vision statement.

Transportation systems will provide accessibility and mobility for all.



Slide no. 30

First, the principle that transportation systems will provide accessibility and mobility for all.



Slide no. 31

That people of all abilities will be able to walk along, and  
across, all streets, safely.



Slide no. 32

That communities of all sizes will be designed on a human scale, to encourage social interaction and commerce.



States and cities will revise existing transportation policies, development standards, and programs to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.



Slide no. 33

That states and cities will revise their policies, development standards, and programs to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.

Transportation and development design decisions will explicitly consider public health outcomes.




America **Walks**

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And finally, that transportation and development design decisions will explicitly consider public health outcomes.

## Additional Resources

- Pedestrian Bicycle Information Center [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)
- Association of Pedestrian & Bicycle Professionals [www.apbp.org](http://www.apbp.org)
- America Walks [www.americawalks.org](http://www.americawalks.org)
- Complete Streets [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)
- Walk 21 [www.walk21.com](http://www.walk21.com)
- [www.Walkscore.com](http://www.Walkscore.com)



 America Walks

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America Walks and the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals are excited about the next steps in the Equal Footing campaign. We hope to garner 10,000 signatories to the Vision for a Walkable America by March 15, 2011. We're very interested to know whether any other countries have had successful campaigns or a national walking strategy. And we hope to come back to you next year in Vancouver with even more to share!

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Thank you!