

## Cross-Sector Coalition Takes Transportation Message to Capitol Hill:

### *Prioritize Active Transportation Networks, Encourage Innovative Financing, Address Health Impacts*

Washington, D.C., Feb. 11, 2014 – The ways in which Americans get around is changing, and so national transportation policies must evolve. To be fiscally responsible, these policies must encourage creative financing and address the transportation system’s significant role in America’s public health crisis of physical inactivity.

These are the key messages to be delivered to lawmakers on Capitol Hill by a groundbreaking coalition of transportation, public health and economic development interests. The Partnership for Active Transportation is launching its policy platform of cost-effective and creative investments in active transportation to meet the changing mobility patterns and needs of today’s America.

Rep. Tom Petri (R-Wis.), chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, and ranking member of that subcommittee, Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), will meet with the Partnership on Tuesday morning to hear its prescription for creating low-cost, high-impact networks for walking and biking to connect employment, shopping, transit and other key destinations.

The Partnership is spearheaded by major national organizations including the American Public Health Association, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, LOCUS (a division of Smart Growth America representing real estate developers), the American Academy of Pediatrics and America Walks. It aims to use its unique cross-sector reach to urge officials to create a transportation network that serves all Americans by leveraging private investment and factoring health impacts into transportation decision-making.

A key message in the Partnership’s *Safe Routes to Everywhere* policy platform received by Petri and Norton is that active transportation networks deserve a greater share of transportation investment because of the burgeoning demand for safe places to walk and bike, and the greater bang for the buck of transportation assets that both spur economic vitality and reduce costly health-care spending.

“The demand in America for safe routes to walk and bike is mushrooming,” says Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s Kevin Mills. “A focused and adequately-funded federal active transportation program is essential to meet this demand. Biking and walking are the fastest growing modes, and transportation policy that ignores this is outdated.



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Increased investment to fill gaps in existing active transportation networks is the most cost-effective way to accommodate short trips and improve access to transit. That's a good use of public dollars, as those investments also address critical public health challenges."

According to Christopher Coes of LOCUS, a few key policy changes would unlock significant improvements to America's outdated transportation system without increasing the burden on taxpayers, by encouraging creative use of existing federal funds.

It is a message gathering steam on Capitol Hill and beyond. Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), Mayor of Atlanta Kasim Reed and U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx all made public statements in recent weeks calling for the federal government to foster creative financing and help communities leverage public investments with private money.

Coes highlights the popular Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, which allows loans to be guaranteed against future revenues, such as ferry tickets and bridge tolls.

"But while TIFIA is great, it isn't optimized for small-scale projects," he says. "Reducing the budget minimum for projects to be eligible for TIFIA, for example, would stimulate construction of active transportation projects and make long-lasting improvements to communities, while also generating value in the form of increased property values, employment and sales taxes. It's a smart solution at a time when we need to be conscious of every dollar."

The Partnership's platform of fiscal responsibility includes a focus on public health, with the American Public Health Association (APHA) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urging lawmakers to properly consider the tremendous costs of a transportation system that discourages healthy behavior.

"Our current transportation system has engineered exercise out of our daily life," says APHA's Susan L. Polan, Ph.D. "Giving all people active transportation options doubles as an investment in the nation's health. Trails, bike lanes and sidewalks allow people to bring exercise into their daily lives, and the end result is improved health and community well-being."

The Partnership says the impact of transportation on health must be recognized in two key policy areas: health impact analyses in transportation planning, and securing the Prevention and Public Health Fund to facilitate community improvements that encourage walking and biking.

"With nearly one in three U.S. children suffering from obesity, this is a critical time to invest in strong policies that encourage healthy, active living," says AAP President James M. Perrin, M.D., FAAP. "We urge federal legislators to support simple, cost-effective policies that help families take advantage of the many health benefits of active transportation."

The Partnership also recommends that all transportation decision-making be subject to performance metrics. Yolanda Savage-Narva of America Walks says "Performance metrics are a key to ensuring that the overall transportation system is balanced, healthy and safe."

The Partnership for Active Transportation will continue its campaign in the lead up to the reauthorization of a new transportation bill, to ensure the federal government maximizes the impact of taxpayer dollars to meet the needs of all Americans for balanced, healthy and safe transportation choices.

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*The Partnership for Active Transportation is a unique collaboration of organizations working at the intersection of transportation, public health and community vitality to promote greater investment in creating safe trail, walking and bicycling networks for all, and facilitating greater physical activity through active transportation.*

*Learn more: [www.partnership4at.org](http://www.partnership4at.org).*