

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



I'm tremendously excited to be WalkBoston's new Board President. These days I'm a land use/commercial real estate attorney at Robinson & Cole. But before obtaining my law degree in the late 1990s, I worked as a transportation planner on promoting alternatives to single-occupancy travel. WalkBoston's mission is one I've worked on and thought about for a long time.

As we see broader acceptance of the gospel of walkability as a quadruple bottom line winner – human health, social connectivity, reduced carbon emissions and economic development – walkability seems a central thread for the re-urbanization of our central cities and inner suburbs. Increasingly, pedestrian-friendly designs appear in new development, even in auto-oriented suburbs and rural areas. In other words, the playing field is tilting in a manner that's never been more favorable for WalkBoston's mission.

We can take advantage of this wave of recognition to carry our work forward in new ways and in new locations so that walking and walkability become a central part of many more public and private investment decisions.

I'd like to extend sincere thanks on behalf of the board, staff, and our membership to outgoing Board President Jessica Sawyer. In her 3 years as President, Jessica helped the board become more organized and effective. Our disappointment in Jessica's stepping down as president is mitigated by knowing she'll remain a member of the board so that we'll continue to benefit from her energy and intelligence.

I welcome your comments and thoughts and hope to see you at the Annual Celebration!

Matt Lawlor

BY WENDY LANDMAN

## Global safe walking strategy

Across the world, road traffic crashes kill about 1.24 million people each year. More than one-fifth of those killed are pedestrians [approximately 270,000]. Road accidents are now the leading cause of death for 15- to 29-year olds in Latin America and the Caribbean. These sober statistics from the 2013 World Health Organization [WHO] report, *Pedestrian Safety, A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioners*, explain why public health experts throughout the world are increasingly focused on engaging government to create prevention strategies.

According to the WHO report, eliminating pedestrian risk is an achievable policy goal: "Pedestrian collisions, like all road traffic crashes, should not be accepted as inevitable because they are, in fact, both predictable and preventable."

Major risk factors for pedestrian accidents identified in the report are vehicle speed, alcohol use by drivers and pedestrians, lack of safe infrastructure and inadequate visibility. To assess pedestrian safety in a given setting, the report recommends that authorities prepare an action plan to design, implement and evaluate effective interventions. A comprehensive approach to safety includes engineering, legislation and enforcement as well as behavioral measures. The constituency for pedestrian safety recognized by the World Health Organization is growing across the globe, as government officials gain understanding of the economic costs of accidents and the health benefits of walkable communities.

Non-governmental organizations are also raising ideas about pedestrian safety. In 2011, the United Nations launched a Decade of Action for Road Safety with the mission of saving 5 million lives by 2020. At the 2012 Walk21 conference in Mexico City, an International Charter for Walking gathered 4,185 signatories representing 88 countries. In South Africa, a Global Road Safety program launched in May 2013 that uses education and enforcement, has a goal of reducing road accidents by 50% by 2020.

Traffic losses have heavy economic costs. In South America, Latin America and the Caribbean, 1% to 2% of GDP is lost annually because of crashes. *continued*

BY NINA COHEN

## A national walking movement is afoot

Walking has been called the club that everybody belongs to and nobody joins. That may be changing. A new interest in the benefits of walking is prompting experts in public health, architecture and other fields to find common ground with walking advocates.

In October 2013 over 400 advocates gathered at the first National Walking Summit in Washington, D.C., which was sponsored by the Everybody Walks Collaborative and underwritten by healthcare giant Kaiser Permanente. Participants attended workshops on how to create buzz, connecting across government silos, and making sure the movement stays inclusive. They dance-walked through a hotel lobby and looked at new mapping tools and other products at a vendor fair. They built skills to persuasively talk about how the built environment impacts the health, social connectedness, economic strength and environmental resiliency of their communities.

Walkability programs are gaining national traction, as ideas that work well in one community are adapted in others. The national Safe Routes to School program, which sponsors Walk To School Day, saw record levels of participation for this event in 2013. In 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, 4,447 schools participated, 41% of which fielded first time programs.

In Massachusetts, the ambitious GreenDOT plan to triple walking, biking and transit trips by 2030 mandates that municipalities seeking state funding have Complete Streets strategies by 2015. MassDOT adopted in 2013 a Healthy Transportation Policy Directive for itself that requires that all modes be considered equally during project design. "As our understanding of the importance of physical activity for human health grows, so has the importance of engaging people to be activists in their communities," says Wendy Landman, WalkBoston Executive Director.

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## events

### Annual Celebration

Tues., March 18th, 5–8pm  
NERD Center, 1 Memorial Drive  
Annual Walk: spring date TBD

**Speaker: Scott Bricker**, America Walks Executive Director since 2010, has quadrupled the size of the organization, made it central to the national walking movement and helped lead the “EveryBody Walk Collaborative.” Scott is a dynamic leader and one of America’s important voices for active transportation.

### Golden Shoes

Sarah Freeman: Jamaica Plain walking advocate; Mayor Gary Christenson & Sharon Santillo: Malden ped activists; Revere Walk to School Champions; Karin Valentine Goins: WalkBike Worcester co-founder.

## renew now

As we head towards WalkBoston’s 25th anniversary in 2015, we thank all our members for your continued support. You’ve helped us grow from a volunteer, Boston-focused group into a professionally staffed organization with an engaged board that works statewide. None of this would happen without you.

We’ll celebrate the progress of the past year and look to the future of walkability at the March 18th Annual Celebration. We hope to see you there—members attend free!

With your help, we will continue to be a powerful voice for pedestrians. Renew today! [WalkBoston.org/join](http://WalkBoston.org/join) or by check in the enclosed envelope; contact Brendan 617.367.9255 with any questions.

## mayoral request

Whether it’s a rejuvenated nightlife scene, 21st-century bus service, third-graders ready for learning, or a new art mecca, ideas for improving Boston are made better with one key ingredient: walking.

A great walking environment is the secret sauce. It gets us to and from nights on the town, children safely to parks and schools and art patrons flocking to new exhibitions.

WalkBoston hopes Mayor Martin Walsh appoints a Transportation Commissioner who will retune traffic signals, slow traffic in retail, residential, school and park areas, improve sidewalk snow clearance, and mark crosswalks at bus stops.

—Wendy Landman, excerpt of Boston Globe letter to the Editor

## advocate praise

### WalkBoston in action

We are making an impact in western Massachusetts – the City of Springfield praised us for the recommendations we provided in our school walkability audits and included them in bid documents for work around one of the schools—“This is fantastic. Thank you so much for all the work you put into this report – it’s incredibly helpful.”

### Satisfaction

The devil is in the details – a Boston neighborhood advocate was happy to tell us that she was successful in getting a bus stop moved so that buses no longer block the pedestrian crosswalk. Action was needed and taken by both the City of Boston and the MBTA.

Renew or join today!

2.14 local/global

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**mission**

WalkBoston makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.

## thank you!

### RACEWALKER



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### STROLLERS

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## Global safe walking strategy

continued

Recognizing the burden of these costs, the Inter-American Development Bank launched a Youth Program to promote road safety at its annual meeting in 2010 in Cancun, Mexico.

A project called Walkability Asia, part of Clean Air Asia, is conducting walkability surveys in 27 Asian cities to identify problem areas and enable policy makers and funders to take action to improve infrastructure. Results are shared on the organization’s website, [www.walkabilityasia.org](http://www.walkabilityasia.org), which serves as a reporting platform for initiatives in Asian cities that are aimed at eliminating pedestrian hazards and improving the walking environment.

No universally accepted “best practice” yet exists for safety campaigns for walkers, but some mix of the “5 E’s” are usually invoked: education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation. A key issue across the globe is traffic speed. Pedestrians hit by slow moving vehicles (20 mph or slower) are 95% likely to survive and to have relatively minor injuries, while those hit at 40 mph have a 95% chance of dying. Thus almost all safety campaigns address traffic speeds in areas where there are pedestrians.

The constituency for pedestrian safety recognized by World Health Organization is growing across the globe, as government officials gain understanding of the economic costs of accidents and the health benefits of walkable communities.

Become a corporate member today! [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org)