Walk Safe and Catch Them All with Pokémon GO

America Walks is excited that the world’s most popular app is luring millions of Americans off the couch and getting them moving. We believe the staggering success of Pokémon GO presents an opportunity to introduce enthusiasts – children and adults alike – to the benefits of walking while helping policy makers recognize the continued necessity of infrastructure and policies that support walking in our communities.

“Virtually anything that gets more Americans out discovering the many joys and benefits of walking is a good thing,” said America Walks Executive Director Kate Kraft of the interactive game that challenges users to “catch” Pokémon using a smartphone app that overlays a map of their locations with the animated monsters.

Even as America Walks is generally enthusiastic about the possibilities presented by Pokémon GO and other interactive gaming, recent reports of tragedies linked to the game should serve as reminders of the importance of remaining vigilant as we move through our environments. The risks of distracted walking are very real but it is also important that we remember that there are other concerns, including the threat posed by distracted driving, that can have even more devastating effects.

One of the greatest risks to anyone walking in an urban area is being hit by a car, a result of the trend in past decades to prioritize the car over those who choose other forms of more active transportation. It is this trend that has resulted in organizations such as America Walks to work so diligently to provide safe and accessible infrastructure for walking. In 2014, more than 400,000 Americans were injured and 3,179 killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers, according to distraction.gov, the U.S. government website on distracted driving. Cell phone use is a leading source of distraction.

America Walks urges communities to continue to work toward education, law enforcement and other interventions to stem the threat posed by distracted driving and to invest in infrastructure and policies to promote more and safer walking while taking steps to promote and educate on the benefits that come from walking, both to the individual and the community as a whole.

“Ultimately, all of us have the responsibility to be alert as we move through our public rights of way and to expect the unexpected,” Kraft said.

Getting more Americans walking is one of the best ways to make walking safer in our communities, but it is important for all of us to be vigilant. Pokémon GO and other fun, engaging ways to get people walking present the perfect opportunity to work toward making America a
great place to walk. Consider the resources below to help get you and your community on a walking path.

**Related Resources**

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Step It Up! Partner’s Guide to Promoting Walking and Walkable Communities* talks about the benefits of walking, how to make places more walkable, and things individuals, families, and communities can do to help build a walking movement.

AARP outlines *11 Vision Zero-inspired solutions* for communities interested in promoting active transportation.

*FHWA Resident’s Guide to Creating Safer Communities for Walking and Biking* outlines how to identify and document safety concerns related to walking and biking, who to notify about such concerns, interventions to help improve the environment for active transportation, community success stories, and other resources.

Walkability expert Dan Burden offers up *10 key elements of walkable places*.

Planner and urban designer Jeff Speck outlines *10 tips to make communities more conducive to walking*. 