2017 National Walking Summit Explores How Walking Can Create Vital and Vibrant Communities

St. Paul, MN - The 2017 National Walking Summit took place in St. Paul, MN this week to a sold-out crowd of over 600 participants representing the diversity, expertise, and passion of the walking movement. The National Walking Summit is the premier opportunity for community advocates, nonprofit representatives, government officials, transit, health, and planning professionals and others to share best practices and stories, increase the visibility of key issues, build support for the walking movement, and create momentum for the work ahead.

The Summit’s theme, Vital and Vibrant Communities: The Power of Walkability, reflected the idea that walkability is at the cornerstone of creating desirable places in which all members of a community can enjoy safe opportunities for physical activity, social and civic engagement and access to jobs and other everyday needs.

The 2017 National Walking Summit featured skills-based intensive trainings and learning-from-place mobile workshops that encouraged attendees to explore St. Paul, a city making great strides in terms of walkability and quality of life. Session topics included growth of the Vision Zero strategy to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries; designing for inclusive health; how to mitigate gentrification and displacement sometimes associated with enhanced walkability; and dozens of examples of community-led efforts to make places more walkable, engaging and accessible.

Featured speakers included George Halvorson, father of Every Body Walk!, who talked about the role walking can play in addressing health and social ills; Glenn Harris, president of the social justice organization Race Forward, who stressed the role place plays in influencing perspectives and outcomes; national disability rights advocate Juliette Rizzo, who reminded the crowd that at some point all of us will confront mobility challenges; and Tamika Butler, head of the Los Angeles Land Trust, who asked participants to think hard about what all of us can do to tackle issues of equity and social justice in our work. The improv troupe Theater for Public Policy even made a cameo, emphasizing the importance of experimentation in giving rise to innovation.

The 2017 National Walking Summit is produced by America Walks and supported by the Every Body Walk Collaborative! as well as national and local program committees. It is sponsored by leading nationwide organizations including Kaiser Permanente, Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. More information on the event can be found at www.walkingsummit.org or by contacting Heidi Simon at hsimon@americawalks.org.

###