On April 10th, 2019, America Walks hosted the webinar, “What’s Next for Walkable Communities”, where we highlighted programs, resources, and practices that are putting walking front and center of the future of communities, and what intersections exist between walking and new mobility.

It featured Jean Crowther, AICP, Senior Associate with Alta Planning + Design, Ryan Westrom, Mobility Partnerships Lead for Greenfield Labs in Palo Alto, CA, and Ellen Zavisca, Principal Transportation Planner for Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). Our inspiring panelists shared intimate details of the innovative processes, resources, tools and creativity that helped them overcome obstacles to walkability.

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees. Panelists took time to offer their expert answers, to continue the conversation and provide further insight on best practices they used for creating safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking conditions in their communities, so you can too.

*Isolation of seniors with low income and limited mobility is a major problem Many of the mobility solutions (Lyft, Uber, bikes and scooters) do nothing to deal with this. Any thoughts?*

Jean: There is an opportunity to see what more can be accomplished with these services, such as helping to solve the issue of low-income isolated seniors. Ride hailing services (like Uber, Lyft) are involved in a number of pilots around the country that are addressing some elements of this, such as UberHealth (providing trips to health care services), GoGoGrandparent, and partnerships with transit agencies to provide a lower cost and more responsive Paratransit service.

Ryan: I agree that mobility solutions should be designed for all ages. The often-cited target of designing for 8-80 comes to mind. I suspect there will be further options developed applicable to the varying needs at these age points.

Ellen: My community offers door-to-door supportive transportation services for seniors, for a small fee. Volunteers are trained to work with seniors and people with disabilities, and they accompany the client on their errand. A better solution is for more communities where people can age in place and get around via walking and/or transit when they’re no longer able to drive.

*Why is there such a disparity between the funding between sidewalk repair and other forms of municipal spending on the transportation sector?*

Ellen: Part of it, I suspect, is that sidewalk repair gets a lot less attention than a new road or trail. We need to hold a ribbon cutting and invite local elected officials & the media when the banged-up sidewalk in our neighborhood finally gets fixed!
Jean: Funding decisions are made at the local level and reflect local priorities. This would be a great question to ask of your municipal staff and local elected officials.

**How is bussing funded in your communities?**

Ellen: If the question is about school busing, here in Knox County it's funded by a combination of state and local tax dollars. I couldn't say how much is state and how much is local. The school buses are owned and operated by private vendors that contract with Knox County Schools. They have all struggled to find qualified drivers, which has led to an increase in spending on school busing in recent years.

**What do you all think about the new scooters that have been popping up in every major city in the US. How is this impacting the walkability? (scooters sometimes are used in the sidewalks ... and fast!)**

Jean: We are still very much in a learning phase when it comes to scooter-share. Broadly, we have seen that the increasingly broader suite of low-impact modes provides a benefit for personal mobility and for efficiency or transportation systems. Having more multimodal choices can positively affect walkability by encouraging less trips made in a vehicle (and supporting walking as a "feeder" mode for multiple types of trips, not just transit). We have also seen local governments work to better manage the interaction between scooters and pedestrians - such as establishing pedestrian priority zones where speeds of scooters in those zones are automatically reduced or organizing marked parking areas for scooters to reduce their interference with the pedestrian clear zone. Education related to good behavior, relevant laws, and user etiquette can also support better co-existence among scooter users and pedestrians.

Ellen: E-scooters are [*new to Knoxvillle*](#), so we're looking at this closely. The vendors are trying to use technology (geo-fencing) to keep the scooters off sidewalks and off certain streets, but we don't know how well that's going to work.

Ryan: We are proud to own Spin, and see great potential for this new mode of transport in cities. I believe new social norms will develop that usually keep their use in the right places. But I absolutely think this points to the great need for dedicated infrastructure for people on all well-used modes.

**What do you see happening in the future to support accessibility for vision and hearing impaired community members?**

Jean: Connected vehicle and infrastructure technology (V2V, V2I, and V2X) may also provide a significant boost to safety of persons walking. We also see opportunity to use new digital platforms for trip planning and route information as a way to provide a more predictable, comfortable and safe walking trip for persons with vision or hearing impairment. We are at an important inflection point in transportation technology, where it will be critical for advocates and mobility managers to prioritize accessibility of digital platforms for persons with a wide range of disabilities.

*It seems to make sense to look into placing some additional walking paths to make it possible to have kids walk.*
Ellen: I agree.

Jean: Yes, continued investment in pedestrian infrastructure and walkways that serve all ages and abilities will always be needed. Regardless of the future of transportation technology trends, this should remain a priority in every community that is serious about advancing health, equity, quality of life, community vibrancy, and social capital.

*How are the cities for the National Street Service selected?*

Ryan: We have begun our National Street Service chapters in various cities based on different leads. If a city is interested, they are absolutely welcome to reach out (as many have!).

*Ellen, has your team considered the implications of increased policing for traffic crashes on drivers of color? Have you considered alternatives to enforcements that do not perpetuate the already overrepresentation of people of color in the criminal justice system?*

Ellen: I agree that any effort to increase traffic safety needs to be very aware of the potential for serious & disproportionate impacts on people of color. My work analyzing crash data is primarily focused on encouraging changes to the design of our streets that will lead to better driver behavior.