

REALTIME FILE

America Walks
The Biden Administration and Transportation Policy
February 22, 2021

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>> Hi everyone and thanks so much for being here and welcome to today's webinar. I am Kelsey Card, communication manager with America Walks. I'll be running the technical stuff behind the scenes. Before we get started I'd like to thank our sponsors including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for making these events possible for us. We also want to thank all of you who attend and who donated to make sure this webinar program and our other programs continue to thrive. These are programs that allow us to really directly support local grassroots activism at the neighborhood level. So if you like this content, and you're a regular guest here, we really encourage you to think about making a donation to our webinars and there will be a link in the chat here to do that shortly. A quick note about the technology, you should see a control panel just like this on your screen. That's where I'll be looking for your questions for our panelists. So after our presentations, we'll kick off the Q&A session so enter any questions that you have right there and if you'd like to use our closed captioning today there is a link in the chat box for you. So our presenters today are Toks Imshakin, director of Caltrans. Beth Osborne, director of Transportation for America. Patrick Wojahn, director of government relations at Rails to Trails Conservancy. And Paulina Baeza senior planner at INCOG. So this is a conversation about what the Biden Administration's transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg means for neighborhoods. We all want to know how big a shift could this really be and what's currently potentially in the works. So our panelists will share their specialized insights on the Biden Administration and transportation policy. So their thoughts and predictions and we'll also spend time answering your questions at the end. So thank you so much to everyone for being here. I'm going to quickly turn things over to Toks now and we will go ahead and get started. - - we can't quite hear you yet. Still not hearing you.

>> TOKS: There we go, I think I may have finally unmuted. Can you hear me?

>> Yes, thanks so much.

>> TOKS: Good morning. And thank you for the quick intro and thank you for the work that you are doing for America Walks and the team for America Walks, Mike, and the entire team there for organizing us to, organizing this esteemed panel to get together this morning. As I share my remarks here and a lot of it is excitement like a lot of people have right now about finally the direction that we're headed in across the country and definitely for sure in the state of California there's a lot of excitement. I just want to briefly say that my remarks here this morning, the points that I'll be making are coming from me as I sit in this role at Caltrans at the California DOT and not in any way speaking formally for the administration or the transition team. I think some people may know I was fortunate enough to be a part of the transition team, the transportation transition team. So we signed nondisclosures and I'm not in any official capacity talking about that work. But let me say this quickly that I think part of the excitement is because there is a clear feeling and belief that we have a lot of momentum behind us. It's a momentous period, but it's also a pivotal period as well. A lot of people are recognizing that even though a lot of the right things are being said and being done, we have to keep our eye on the ball if you will. It is not a time to relax on the issues that we believe are important for transportation and livability across the board. And I'll say they're what I call the big five in transportation that California is focused on and I think the nation should be focused on as well. And I think they are. I think the new team that's been assembled, secretary Buttigieg and the team, I think they're focused on --. But the big five in my mind, safety I think that's an issue. We still have roughly 36,000 people dying on our transportation system each year in California. We're at 10% of the nation's fatalities when it comes to the transportation network. And the vulnerable users of the systems are the ones that have seen an uptick in fatality numbers and serious injury numbers. It's coming from the vulnerable users. People who are working, people who are biking and trying to get access to transit. So safety is absolutely key and probably number one on the big five list. Number two is climate action. I think everyone knows that transportation continues to lead the way when you talk about impacts of GHG across the country. Nearly 1/3 of all GHG in the country comes from the transportation sector, roughly 30%. In California it's actually worse. In California, that number is a little over 40% of the GHG in California comes from the transportation sector. So a decision is needed now. And I think the team has said this would be a focus of theirs. And then next is equity, number three on that big five list is equity. The fact that we finally, I believe, are taking seriously discussions of equity around this country. The reckoning that's taking place around issues of injustice. I think in many cases across the country for several of the last years have given lip service to this issue. But I think this summer after the unrest, after the unfortunate killing of George Floyd, I think we're finally saying look what are we going to do in our organizations? What are we going to do in our separate departments and sectors? And transportation no doubt has a difficult and in some cases negative history and some of the impacts that it's had on minority communities and underserved communities in this country. So I think we're finally at that point where a lot of equity-based policy decisions are going to come out. And you could tell by some of the decisions that the President has made already. And the last two are mobility access, mobility or access. The fact that from a mobility standpoint we need to continue to shift into a place where we're maintaining and operating the transportation system. That we're not necessarily focused on expanding the transportation network with new highway infrastructure. So not really spending a lot of federal dollars on widening highways across the country, on building giant freeways across the country but focusing on maintaining the system, a fix it first approach. Fully embracing and adapting that approach is where we need to be and improving mobility and access in all modes. Walking, biking, cross transit, rail, investigating in a full multimodal transit system is a place that we need to truly try to get to. And fifth and final on that list of the big five is funding and economic empowerment. And when I say economic empowerment I think people across the country already know that investing in transportation means jobs as well. It's not just about their mobility, but the fact that jobs are created. For every billion dollars spent in transportation we create 14,000 jobs. For every billion dollars. So there's a lot of economic upward mobility that's created when you invest in transportation. And then the funding piece of that economic empowerment is the fact that we need to figure out how we're going to fund transportation moving forward in the future. We still borrow roughly \$12 billion to \$14 billion every year from non transportation related funds to pay for transportation which doesn't make a lot of sense. We need to solidify the highway trust fund and think about the future of how we fund transportation, possibly moving away from a gas tax to some other form of funding that maybe DOT or some other source of funding for transportation. Those are the big five that I would say for sure we're thinking about quite a bit in California. And I know the Biden Administration and Secretary Buttigieg's team is probably focused on as well. And next up, I think I'm supposed to be handing the baton across here. I would like to hand the baton to my old colleague and friend, Beth Osborne. Beth, are you there?

>> BETH: I surely am. Firstly I want to say how lucky it is to have Toks leading Caltrans and the important goals California is setting for their transportation system. But also to see that great message coupled with great action. We're seeing rules and standards and measurements change in California. And that's what we're looking for with the feds as well so far we're hearing a lot of great terminology. Now we need to see action follow that. And I think that's something we've heard from America walks that we've gotten ourselves this far, but the network now needs to make sure that we hold the new leadership accountable for the action. So before I get to what that action could look like, I would like to back up and remind us of where we are. So my organization Smart Growth America which is the parent organization for Transportation for America and I actually manage the National Complete Streets coalition as well has been measuring the role roadway design plays in fatalities for a while now. We have noticed that while roadways are getting safer for drivers, it is getting less safe for pedestrians, those outside the vehicle who don't need to drive, and who don't have the money to drive which is overrepresented by our people of color. I'm going to give you a little sneak peek here, in about two weeks you're going to see the new dangerous design. It's really just as bad as it's been. There's really no change. I will point out we're looking at 2010 to 2019 because there's a lot of data scrubbing and fixing that occurs before we get to see the 2020 data. Basically we see a lot of states, most states are having trouble meeting their own targets for reducing fatalities and that they are even struggling to figure out best how to make that happen they do set those standards. We also found in 2020 that at least in the first six months of the year, we saw an increased fatality rate overall but definitely hitting pedestrians, no pun intended. And a lot of that is because the design of our roadways tells the driver to go so fast that quite often without traffic

congestion there to slow them down, they just followed the design and so they were going at very high rates of speed. Often that design tells them to go faster than the posted speed, the speed we decided is the safe speed. The fact that our posted speed and the design of the roadway aren't synced up is a serious problem and it's fully within the control of state DOTs and the federal DOT to address. You prioritize safety and speed at the same time. The way you prioritize safety and speed is you don't have the speed by development or people. That's why on the interstates and separated highways you can have a high rate of speed. But once you bring that design to the level of where the people are whether in urban, suburban, ex-urban or rural towns, it doesn't work. The road, the faster they go doesn't give them a chance to react if there's a potential conflict and a crash is more deadly. This is the roadways we tend to get as we prioritize throughput and high-speed car travel. You see the lonely person in the upper left hand corner. Providing that person with a way to cross would result in slow traffic. And in fact if he were to walk across and get hit he would be blamed with jaywalking. But if a lot of people don't do that, our rules don't permit us to establish a crossing. But basically the way our rules work right now, we need a bunch of people to take the chance of sacrificing themselves to make the chance for a crossing.

My organization has set three priorities, that is to prioritize maintenance, prioritizing safety over speed which we have both talked about, and connecting people to jobs and services using performance measures that looks not at vehicle flow but whether or not you arrive at your destination. Using what I would call recent technology, but frankly some of it is not very recent anymore like GIS is near 20 years old. So what can we ask of this administration? Well first is executive actions, looking at the manuals and standards they apply to use state and federal dollars. One of them is called the MUTCD, there is a new addition before the public now and the Federal Highway Administration is accepting comments. I would argue that they should rescind and redraft this current condition because it makes a lot of the things we're seeking such as easier crossings for pedestrians, slower speeds on the roadway, slower speed limits on the roadways and things like that hard process that require a lot of exceptions to the rule. The green book which is the design guide for our highways does the same thing. It permits us to build a community that is walkable, it just makes it really hard to do it because you have to ask for permission over and over to get out of highway standards. What we're looking for is particularly in developed areas particularly rural and urban, where the businesses are, where the people are, you flip that on its head. You make it easy to build a community for those that are moving around both inside and outside a car where that can happen. There are also a lot of performance and projections that could lead us in the wrong way. We could require the DOTs to check the accuracy of their models. A lot of times they can't allow a crossing is because their models will tell them there will always be more traffic and more drivers no matter what so it looks like when you create more space for the pedestrian you're going to create a huge bottleneck even though our design can shift the way people travel. I'm just going to jump down to the last two, we can set climate as one of the standards we care about and we could ask the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to stop victim blaming and ask people who are getting hit to be more visible when we have a roadway system that hides them from driving. When we have automobile, particularly SUV design, that makes people very hard for drivers to see. We shouldn't make it hard for drivers to see people or know where they're coming from. We should have a design that makes that clear and obviously and make it easy for people to get around. And the last thing I'll point out is all of the legislative actions coming up. We should be looking to embed climate, equity, safety, public health, and economic growth in all of our transportation investments which goes back to the priorities I shared. A fix it first not only invents a traffic inducing expansions of highways. But it also makes sure that where you live, the infrastructure is functional and in good condition. Measuring multimodal access, whether or not people actually get to jobs and essential services whether they're in a car or not. And another I will mention is transit funding parity. If we move to a world where we're funding transit as much as highways, we could provide 100,000 people access to pretty high quality transit, about the quality that you see in a city like Chicago. And in stimulus, I just want to point out I was very much a part of the last stimulus bill in 2009 where we created stimulus by pouring money into all of our existing programs that are creating the problems we're talking about, the lack of walkability, the lack of safety, the separation of communities from the things they need, particularly communities of color and most often black communities. The DMT-increasing, greenhouse gas-increasing infrastructure. And that doesn't make any sense, we shouldn't just be creating jobs through construction, we should be creating jobs through construction that make our communities better. So rather than just dumping money into the existing programs, it would be good for the new administration to call for funds to go after specific purposes that match their specific purposes like climate and equity and economic recovery. I have provided a link here and I'm happy to share it in the chat as well. Our transition recommendations which include a lot of these things. And with that I'm going to stop sharing.

>> Thank you so much, Beth. And thank you, Toks. We'll pass it on to Patrick now.

>> PATRICK: Thank you, Beth. And thank you, Kelsey, for putting this webinar together. I'm going to show my screen here. I hope you can see that. All right so first let me tell you a little bit about who I am and then I'll talk about what some of what our hopes are with the new administration and new Congress that we have in place to really turbocharge our nation's investment in safe and connected infrastructure for walking and biking. The nation's largest trails, walking, and biking organization. Our goal is to build a nation connected by trail. So we are working with communities around the country to build infrastructure for walking and biking that is both safe and we see the safest infrastructure is infrastructure that is trail, that is separated from the roadways so that people can walk and bike safely, but also connected. That it gets people to places where they need to go on a daily basis. And this is me. In addition to serving as director of government relations, I serve as the mayor of College Park, Maryland. We are a suburban community that was historically built up the way Beth described where we have infrastructure predominantly focused on accommodating cars and accommodating cars moving fast. Right now we're a university community as the name suggests, home of the University of Maryland at College Park. And we are focused on smart growth around the university. So our goal really is to make it safe for people who live nearby the university, who live in our community to be able to walk or bike safely to the university and building walking and biking infrastructure. So I serve in different leadership roles in the national level with the U.S. Conference of Mayors as we've been successful in position us as a model for communities. In terms of where we see the Biden Administration and what our opportunities are now, we are building now on a 30 year legacy of efforts to enhance opportunities for walking and biking that really was started with the intermodal surface transportation efficiency act of 1991 that funded the first time the transportation enhancements program, it's currently known as the transportation block grant program but most people know it as transportation alternatives and the recreational trails program. These programs that for three decades have been the bread and butter of infrastructure for walking and biking and have a lot of good impacts around the country. In the past 30 years these are the 13 people that have served as secretaries of transportation during that time either in an acting basis or had their appointment fully approved by Congress, by the Senate. And the way that the transportation alternatives and recreational trails programs have been implemented have really varied greatly throughout those 30 years in terms of their focus, in terms of how quickly they've gotten their resources out on the ground to enable people, enable communities to build that infrastructure. And we're very optimistic and excited about what we might be able to see with our new secretary of transportation, former South Bend mayor, Pete Buttigieg. I had an opportunity to pose a question to Mayor Buttigieg about walking and biking and his lessons in South Bend and opportunities he sees to work with the Department of Transportation to increase the amount of investment and the work of local communities to empower them to build out transportation infrastructure. And this is what he said in response which there are a few more pieces to this which show what opportunities we have with a new administration. One is that he seemed open to the idea of really looking at how the Department of Transportation works with local communities to support building infrastructure for walking and biking and even the structure of the Department of Transportation to show that walking and biking should be a priority, is a mode of transportation along with roads and highways, along with transit, and that he sees that walking and biking should be given a priority place within the department. He talks about his trip when he was mayor of South Bend together with former Secretary of Transportation Anthony Fox under the Obama Administration, and that he saw what was happening in places like Copenhagen and Amsterdam. And we all know about how they really enhanced their infrastructure for walking and biking. But what struck him is that at one point Copenhagen and cities like that and Amsterdam were no more friendly to walking and biking than American cities were. And that what it really took for them to do it was a conscious choice, a conscious effort with real investment and real prioritization of walking and biking, and a lot of pain, a lot of lessons, a lot of effort to really get to where they are now. And he sees and understands that what we need to do in the United States similarly is to really focus our resources, focus our effort, and prioritize walking and biking. He also pointed out as many of us I'm sure have heard the idea here that there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing. But that places like Copenhagen are not known for great weather but that even despite that they can get people out walking and biking safely. So in terms of what needs to happen to get that support from the Federal Government to the local level, he talked about resources, he talked about dollars, he talked about moral support and is looking for ways to build his team in the Department of Transportation that will support that for communities.

So what we're hoping is that this will turn active transportation from a trend into a form. You see here the Indianapolis cultural trail, the midtown greenway in Minneapolis. All of the different things we have been working on around the country to build trails and connect people by walking and biking. And we all know the benefits that this can have. Economic benefits that it can have, and a lot of this ties very much into the priorities of

the administration with their goals of addressing climate and their goals of making communities safer for people to walk and bike and their goals of boosting the economy and what's become clear especially over the last year during the Coronavirus pandemic as we've been dealing with that, really people have been turning to walking and biking as a way to get outside and get fresh air. Let me just talk briefly, and this is the transportation pilot program which came from 2005 but really around poor communities around the country both boosted funding for walking and biking and had significant benefits. We know, we understand very well because we've done this before that we can get a lot of benefits out of boosting that investment. So this is, I'm going to go briefly over the rails to trails agenda for active transportation. But these are the different benefits that we can see. This is the list of organizations that has supported our agenda, supports this effort. You can see a range of groups from groups that support accessibility for people with disabilities, smart growth organizations, and groups like the National League of Cities that support local governments. Briefly and I can answer more questions about this during the Q&A, this is a list of our asks for the first relief reauthorization of the FAST Act as that's being debated in Congress this year. We are looking for Congress to dedicate \$5 million per year over the course of five years so \$2.5 million for direct grants that go to communities to support connected and safe connected active infrastructure. Again focusing on infrastructure that is safe that people are able and willing to walk and bike on that infrastructure and connected so it gets people to where they need to go. And supporting communities, we know communities around the country have plans in place about the infrastructure that they want to build, the networks that they want to build so providing dedicated funds to enable them to do that. Transportation alternatives has funded a lot of good projects over the years, but it's these significant grants when transportation alternatives is spread thinly over many communities, it's difficult when a community has a network plan in place that would cost tens of millions of dollars a year to fund that through transportation alternatives. We do also want to increase transportation alternatives to hold back from its current rate of \$850 million per we're to \$1.7 billion per year to fully fund the recreational trails program in line with the gas tax that is paid into the highway trust fund by off road recreation vehicles that we estimate to be \$250 million a year. Currently that's funded at \$84 million per year. And then to really look at as Mayor Buttigieg put it the way the Department of Transportation is structured. To look at it might be better structured to prioritize walking and biking including potentially establishing an active Transportation Administration. In terms of some work we want to do in the policy and regulatory goals, we want to look at the planning process. Currently many communities have been frustrated about how planning in metropolitan planning organizations oftentimes they're perceived as a check the box exercise and many community organizations, many neighborhoods that are impacted by transportation decisions don't really feel like they have a place at the table. And so we have a pilot program that we're working on to fund communities around the country to be an example of active partnerships between transportation planning agencies and community-based organizations so they really can have a place at the table. And then within the context of the work that as Toks mentioned before, transportation is the leading cause right now, the single leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions. Making sure we look at a mode shift as a strategy in curbing carbon emissions. And also looking at ways the use of e-bikes, the use of electric bicycles is exploding and that's another tool to increase active transportation. Looking at regulations to support that. This again is our website where you can find out more information about our policy priorities. And this is the Department of Transportation building that we're looking at making our way into it and making some change there. So thank you very much. And with that I think I will turn it to Paulina. Stop sharing. To moderate our question and answer session.

>> PAULINA: Thank you so much, Patrick. And thank you for having me. Definitely all of these topics very interesting, very related to what we're living in our time. Yes, we definitely have a lot of questions coming in. So regarding everything that's going on right now, the pandemic, greater awareness of climate change, a deeper public understanding of racial equity concerns and the hopefulness of a new administration, are we looking at a transformational break from the past or just moderate or incremental change? And what are you all looking forward to regarding transportation in the future with each of your specific work? I open this question to the entire panel.

>> Thanks, Paulina. Can you hear me? I'll give this a shot before I hand it over to Beth and Patrick. I think your question is whether or not this is a true break considering all of the challenges that equity and Covid and all of the challenges?

>> Correct.

>> TOKS: I would say it is. I would say compared to the last four years we're going to see something that's quite different from the measures and the approach that the last team used. And I've always said if something is a priority, there are three ways to know especially in the public sector or even in an NGO, or whatever the organization is, something is a priority, there are three ways to know whether or not it's a true priority, the actions you take, the policies you put in place, and what kind of resources you dedicate towards those policies. And so if you start off with just the actions for example for example the mayor understands their issues on the ground, works on relating issues, bike-related issues, transit related issues and a team being built around them as well. The President talked very early on during the campaign about a justice program where 40% of funding that will be created for climate budget will go to addressing issues of environmental justice across the country. That kind of dialogue shows you that again there's a bit of a, quite a bit of a break from the rhetoric and the discussion from the past. And then from a policy standpoint, policies that the President is putting in place and the team alike is working on, an example is the Paris agreement that the President rejoined last week and what that stands for. And recognizing the road that we as a country play in climate issues. I think the United States is like 4.5% of the world's population but we represent 15% of the GHG in the entire globe. So more than three times what our population is. We're number two in the world. So compared to the prior folks who said we don't need to do anything with this, recognizing that we're right after China when it comes to pollution-related challenges in the world. And the president as well along those lines had an executive order. I'm not sure if people are familiar with this, but it talks about tackling the climate crisis is specifically what it says, tackling the climate crisis is the heading or the title of it. But it goes into a lot of detail about what multiple departments, U.S. departments, the role that they will play including departments that we expect like EPA and energy, but also HUD and DOD and saying look, you've got to take action and address issues related to climate as part of your decision-making process moving forward. And finally from a resources standpoint of those three things, if you're seeing whether or not something is, priorities are truly changing, from a resource standpoint again we've got to figure out the reauthorization, we've got to figure out funding for transportation. But the signals are already there that from a resource standpoint things are going to change. The info grants were announced last week. Not completely related to the bike side and transit side of the world, more focused on infrastructure for freight. But nevertheless if you look at the criteria that was laid out in this roughly a billion dollar program that actually they changed the name of it, but it's roughly a billion dollar program, but three of the criteria that are set out really focus on creating a more multimodal system, addressing climate, and addressing equity. And an equity based freight program. That's pretty great to make a dramatic shift in the language that was used in the prior administrations that were rolled out. But I think part of the challenge that's going to happen from a resource standpoint, Patrick showed some of this information in his slides is programs like TAP really, really need a boost. They really need some new investment. I think Patrick was being conservative I would say. I would say the program probably needs to be tripled to be honest with you. It needs three times the investment that it currently has because of the demand, because of the need when you look every year, the demand across the country, it's clearly there. So tripling the amount of money we spend on walking, biking, and transit is absolutely needed at this moment. If you look at the household travel survey and look at the percentage of people who walk and bike for trips in this country, I think roughly right now it's probably about 12% or 13% of trips happen in that form. So if that's the case and we're spending the TAP program right now is like 2% of the transportation budget whereas 12% of the trips happening are sort of active transportation related, it's clear we need to do something different there. And time will tell for this team if they can follow through on the resources related to those needs as well. Fair and good question.

>> I'll just add as someone who was part of the last administration and I particularly think about with Secretary Fox's leadership how much time and attention was given to what a lot of the highways have done to black neighborhoods and other minority neighborhoods particularly his own where the highway created a big barrier for him and his family and his neighbors to get to the things that they needed in order to give some extra convenience to those that were trying to barrel through his community and people who looked very differently than the people who were being inconvenienced. I think we've done a decent job in bringing attention to these issues in the past. Maybe not with the level of commitment or the open ears to it that we have today. Where we fell short is we just did pilots. We supported programs to fix the damage but not stopping the big programs from stopping the damage. We didn't make changes to the rules. We had interagency committees that talked about it but didn't enact any real change. I myself was one of the drivers of the partnership for sustainable communities, but nothing from the partnership for sustainable communities became part of the permanent programs and that's unacceptable. And that's what I'm looking for from this administration. Right now if all of the money spent from the Federal Highway Program on projects in areas where people actually live were built properly, we would have all of that money for bike and ped movements, every penny of it and that's \$45 billion to \$50 billion a year. What we do in this country in the name of reform is we resurface a roadway and we design it continuing and then we ask a tiny program to come back and retrofit it while we're continuing to build more wrong things. It's like using a bulldozer to dig a ditch and then having people refill it with a teaspoon and that's what we need to change. And it's not easy, I'm not saying it because it's easy, I'm saying it because we have to hold the

administration to the high level of effort it's going to take to make this real. They are going to struggle to make the program about anything but highway expansion, because the way it's written in the law makes it hard to do anything but highway expansion. And I look forward to seeing how they make a highway expansion program be multimodal when it statutorily limits the money to highway expansion. These are going to be hard changes to make. Even in the rhetoric there's a couple of things we could push the new leaders to improve on. In Secretary Buttigieg's confirmation, he talked about electrifying vehicles, he did not talk about allowing people to get out of vehicles. And we could help take that another step and point out that we shouldn't be making changes for the climate that don't also improve equitable access to essentials and to jobs because frankly we are perfectly capable of electrifying the system while fully embedding the inequities of the last 70 years even deeper into our future. Just trading one car for another car while maintaining the rest of the system that blocks people from getting around outside of a car, that's not a climate initiative, that's an unfortunate way forward. To their credit everyone in this administration is reaching out and asking everyone to make sure they don't do it. I think we have open ears, but we have to keep pushing.

>> PATRICK: Let me just add the events of the last year have brought on a change in how we think about transportation. Just some examples of the Washington metropolitan council of governments that covers Washington, D.C. and College Park where I'm mayor, that survey showed people are starting to think very differently about transportation as a result of the pandemic and that 60% of the population surveyed said that they will likely be telecommuting at least one day a week. The number of people who plan to be walking or biking to work at least one day a week will double. And of course with the growing understanding of racial equity injustice, I think there's an increased understanding not just from the past year, that's from going back to Anthony Fox and as Beth talked about, everything he did with the Department of Transportation, underscoring the understanding that transportation investment is a tool for equity and can be used in good ways to promote equity or to destroy and disrupt communities of color. So with that understanding, there's an opportunity here but we as both Beth and Toks said, we need to take the resources and the growing understanding that we have into policy.

>> PAULINA: Thank you, Patrick. And now that you mentioned that, I would like to ask you do you think the administration has indicated how they will prioritize active transportation equity needs? Like often the effect of bike infrastructure spending has been to exacerbate inequality by focusing on white commuters instead of thinking about how BIPOC users use transportation differently. And this question comes from our attendees.

>> PATRICK: I think what Toks said about the INFRA grants, was a good place to go. I think it's going to be carried out there everything else that they do as well. We need to keep an eye on it and make sure that they continue to prioritize that, that it's not just a flash in the pan. That in the next years to come, that continues to be a thread throughout everything that they do. But I do think it's a good indication.

>> I'd definitely like to raise the complexity here in that we have to understand that we are inheriting decades and decades if not centuries of structural racism. So it's not simple to address what BIPOC communities may need. The fact of the matter is we've spent generations taking the ability to safely walk and bike around away from people. And at a time where there was an increasing demand for it. So now you've got supply held down while demand is increasing. That means if you build it, you have price pressures. And until you get equilibrium those price pressures are going to exist. So we can't make a move today that doesn't trigger all of the damage we've caused for decades upon decades. And if you are in one of these communities, you have concerns about that. So if we're going to listen and include the neighborhood and they say I'm not comfortable for these reasons that go back decades and then we say okay well we won't build here, but the neighborhoods that will take the projects are in white neighborhoods, then you're further exacerbating the problem. And it's not unwound with one step, it's going to be very challenging and nobody is wrong in that scenario. It's right for the community that has seen underinvestment, fearing in investment that could cause price pressures. At the same time we don't want to cause that distrust which is fair to distrust the government that has caused problems is also going to leave those who most need access behind. And unwinding this is going to take a multi prong and long-term effort.

>> Perfect. Thank you so much. And regarding that, what would you like to see in terms of the new administration advocating for decriminalizing walking and biking, and particularly addressing the response of police in ticketing persons of color?

>> TOKS: Well that's a tough one. That's a big question, there's a lot to add there. I think we appropriately have made the shift from talking about safety when it comes to active transportation and transportation in general to talking about safe systems and two talking about the enforcement component in a way that's equitable. So I no longer want to talk about this issue with our law enforcement counterparts in the state. Equitable enforcement is a term we use and we go through the process of explaining from our perspective what equitable enforcement means. It's not part of our state highway safety plan. And also the safe systems approach. I think it's something important to keep in mind as part of that sort of decriminalization as you call it to understand that the issues we're trying to address on safety are not always about the person that ultimately got hit. In this case a lot of times the vulnerable user. That's where sort of our culture and the tradition of enforcement has always linked. It's yeah, the person on that bike that got hit, they did something wrong. And so helping not only us in the transportation community but the law enforcement community to start talking about an understanding a true safe systems approach, I think to recognize some of the things Beth laid out very well that they're design issues that impact very much safety they're behavioral issues. So it's a full system of issues that we need to be looking at. Speed, as a part of a system. We need to be looking across the board and not just looking at the person that got hit and saying yeah, they're involved in some kind of criminal way. But that's my quick thoughts on that.

>> Isn't it nice to have a leader of the DOT say that? It really makes me so happy. I remember being in Florida when they were updating their statewide highway safety plan and talking about the four E's. But when my organization, we were leading a lot of these sessions, tried to raise the engineering E, they got very unhappy. They resisted it extraordinarily. There's a big push in a lot of states towards enforcement because it gets them out of engineering change and we have to recognize that at the same time the police were showing up and saying we don't want to be in this business at all. And interestingly I believe it was a podcast called through line that talked about the origins of traffic enforcement. The police fought it tooth and nail, they wanted no part of it until prohibition when people were transporting alcohol by car and they wanted to stop cars to find bootleggers. But the reaction of the police at first was right, we shouldn't have any part of this. And what we should be looking for in transportation is making it really uncomfortable to drive in an unsafe way and make it really comfortable and natural to drive in a safe way. And we have that completely reversed. We make it very comfortable to drive fast and whip around turns and things like that. And then we're just shocked that these crazy people are making these crazy decisions that we laid out the road to tell them to do. So I hope that we look towards more self-enforcing roads rather than police catching people for doing something that felt natural to do because of the way we laid out the roads.

>> We're working with leaders on equity issues from around the country to really dig into these issues and develop ways that we can have stronger policy and other safety initiatives. And ideally reviews enforcement or looks at enforcement in a way that is more equitable and focuses on the way that we design things so that people aren't encouraged to do things in a way that aren't safe.

>> Thank you. And we have a few questions regarding rural communities. So how does the administration plan to ensure that a robust transportation system will actually connect rural communities to regional service and overall opportunities to thrive.

>> Trails are great in rural communities as well. And we have a lot of resources available about how trails have been helpful in rural communities, not just as a way of transportation but also as a way of bringing in recreational tourism dollars. But small towns or trails can help build a main street area in a small town and help connect between towns and rural areas. That's part of our active transportation grants focus on rural areas as well as suburban and rural areas.

>> I will also just add that the rural urban dichotomy is false. There are urban places and rural places where people live and there are places where people don't live and that's the split. The issues that rural towns face are really the same as in most urban neighborhoods. Very few urban neighborhoods are skyscraper filled areas. In whole communities they have none of those. My neighborhood in the middle of Washington, D.C. feels like a sizable rural town. And when I lived in Ravenswood, West Virginia which at its height of development was 5,000 people and now it's back down to about 2,000 people, you could walk absolutely everywhere in that community and a lot of the changes made since then clawed that back just like in urban areas. So I would say a lot of what we have to do in urban areas, exactly what we need to do in rural in terms of connecting people to what they need. We should not be making it more comfortable to go 100 miles for people's necessities, we should be seeking ways to bring their necessities closer to them. This notion that rural people just love driving long distances and spending an incredible amount of time to get to hospitals is a lie. It's what you say when you don't care about rural people having access to a convenient health care. So I think we should be looking at broadband and subsidizing bringing more health care close to people rather than constantly seeking ways to make long distance travel more convenient.

>> Thank you. Okay so for the sake of time, I have one last question coming from the public as well. Given all of these changes, what advice would you give to local advocates under local advocacy efforts for promoting walking?

>> TOKS: This is probably a better question possibly for Patrick and Beth. But I'll say real quickly that a lot of advocates and nonprofits that work on this issue probably have

been a little apathetic about the recent years and how much of a struggle it's probably been on these issues. I think it's time to reengage. If you're at the local level or whatever level you may be working on, time to absolutely walk back in. We've got a team of people that have been appointed to lead us in this country that very much understand the issues, but that doesn't mean we step back off as advocates or people working in the government spaces and say oh yeah, they've got it. It's time to be fully engaged and continue to push for these issues on all corners. And I'll say just quickly that it's not just about the federal level. I think a lot of times that's where our attention goes to and we say oh yeah, the president or the secretary, no, I mean you've got city government level mayors, county elected officials, state senators and reps that we need to be pushing for change at that level as well. But also working with again the federal level, your members of Congress to say if there's a new authorization or reauthorization of these things are critical to our community. And so I think it's time to lock back in and be fully engaged again.

>> PATRICK: I don't think I could have anything to add to that. That sums it up pretty well.

>> BETH: Yeah. Do what Toks said.

>> PAULINA: Thank you so much.

>> Thank you so much everyone. Paulina, go ahead.

>> PAULINA: No, no. I was just going to say thank you so much for the invitation. I really enjoyed all of this information. And I was going to give it to you, Kelsey.

>> Thank you. I know a few people have to drop off and thank you all for sticking with us through the hour as well and thanks so much to you Paulina and all of our panelists for sharing your insights and expertise on this really important and hyper relevant topic obviously. And thanks to everyone for being engaged. We received a lot of really great questions. So I think we'll just end and echo what Toks said to open us up that it's clearly not a time to react on these issues and that action is needed now and it's time to hold leadership accountable for that action. So again thanks to our panelists for giving us so many ideas, tools, and really an energized impetus for carrying this work forward. We want to thank our sponsors again for the webinar. And if you enjoyed today's discussion, please consider playing a part in keeping more content like this coming your way by making a donation. You will see a link in the chat box. We suggest \$15 to \$20, but anything helps and really goes a long way towards extending and improving our work. I want to let you all know as well that our next webinar is called storytelling for advocates. That's happening Wednesday, March 17th at 2:00 p.m. eastern. We're going to discuss how we can all be reaching more people and convince people of the benefits of inclusive and accessible walkable communities through storytelling. So we've put together a panel of really creative and experienced communicators to share their ideas about how we can cut through the noise and move people to action in that way. I also want to mention that America Walks is going to be accepting story submissions that speak to how the manual on uniform traffic control devices has been a barrier to you getting your people first work done. So if you have stories on that, we're going to release details in our newsletter this week and we'd love to hear from you. So thank you again so much for joining us today. It's always a pleasure to spend this time with you. Keep a look out for the survey email so you can tell us what you thought of this webinar. We really do value your feedback and input. And thank you again to all of our guests for their precious time today. Have a really great day and we'll see you next time.

>> Great job Paulina and Kelsey. Great job.

>> Thank you, Toks.

>> Thanks for your work.

>> Thanks so much.