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The Weather Report

The official newsletter of
Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking
Strengthening and Uniting Coalitions Across North America

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YOU'RE INVITED! BRING BENCHMARKING TO YOUR CITY

Are you an advocacy leader in a small or mid-sized city who's felt left out of Thunderhead Alliance's [2007 Benchmarking Report](#)? In 2007 we collected data and reported on bicycling and walking in the 50 most populous U.S. cities, but this time we're inviting your mid-sized or small city to get involved! If you want to see how your community compares to others throughout the U.S., then let us know you want your city in. (Our analysis takes population and city size into account so don't worry!).

Thunderhead Alliance recently sent City and State surveys to all 50 states and the 50 most-populous U.S. cities. If you are from a city that's not in the top 50 and want to participate, send an e-mail to Kristen "at" [thunderheadalliance.org](mailto:kristen@thunderheadalliance.org) and we'll send you a survey. We're also inviting any advocacy organization who wants to get involved with organization benchmarking to contact us for an Organization Survey.

If you want to get involved, or have any questions about the U.S. Bicycling and Walking Benchmarking Project or surveys, please contact Kristen Steele at Kristen "at" [thunderheadalliance.org](mailto:kristen@thunderheadalliance.org).

HELP RE-NAME THUNDERHEAD ALLIANCE - WIN \$\$\$

You may have heard that the Large Hadron Collider, that was supposed to swallow the world when turned on, recently changed their name to "Halo" to better reflect the immensity of their scientific mission. The Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking wants to change our name too, though we're not likely to swallow the planet, just walk and ride all around it.

Thunderhead Alliance is embarking upon a process to rebrand the organization. We've grown over the years. We've added many incredible groups to our alliance, including pedestrian advocacy organizations, and today we need a name that reflects our new identity and goals. We're inviting all our members to share with us ideas for a new name. We're developing a communications messaging strategy that we will be using as the criteria to choose the new name.

Even if you don't feel like your name would get picked, submitting your idea provides insight into what you (our members) want in a name. If at the end of this process we do choose your name you will win a \$250 voucher good towards your Thunderhead Alliance membership, Thunderhead Alliance publications, or registration for one of our trainings or retreats.

Criteria for new name:

1. Clear, differentiated, and memorable (i.e. very short and unlikely to be shortened).
2. Inclusive of bike AND pedestrian advocacy groups
3. Supports Thunderhead Alliance as strategic, smart, credible, effective, action-oriented, and a leader.
4. Connects with Thunderhead Alliance's mission.
5. NOT wonky and no acronyms!

Submit your name ideas for a chance to win at www.thunderheadalliance.org/name. If you have other feedback you'd like to share on this process, or Thunderhead Alliance communications in general, please e-mail Kristen "at" thunderheadalliance.org.

MAKING THE CASE FOR INCREASED FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN BIKING & WALKING

The [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#) has just released a new report chock-full of data to help you advocate for a greater investment in biking and walking. *Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking* makes the case in qualitative and quantitative terms for treating bicycling and walking as critical transportation priorities. The quantitative analysis focuses on the benefits of shifting short trips from driving to bicycling and walking, as well as related increases in the use of public transportation and the creation of mixed use development. The report shows that fuel savings, reduction of CO2 emissions, and increases in physical activity could be worth tens of billions of dollars each year. The report also uses success stories from communities across America to highlight the potential for the rest of the country.

You can help spread the word about this exciting new report by posting a link from your organizations' website. To view the report, [visit the Rails to Trails Conservancy's website](#).

8TH ANNUAL NEW PARTNERS FOR SMART GROWTH CONFERENCE: Building Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities: January 22-24, Albuquerque, NM

The [New Partners for Smart Growth Conference](#) has grown significantly since it began several years ago - increasing in scope, attendance, and prestige - and is now considered to be the "premier" smart growth conference held each year. The strength of this conference comes from the variety of participants and speakers who cross disciplines to share experiences and insights, and valuable tools and strategies to encourage smart growth implementation and "get it done."

The program will span three full days. There will be some pre-conference tours scheduled for Wednesday, January 21st, but the main program will kick-off on Thursday morning, January 22nd and continue through Saturday afternoon. The three-day schedule includes a dynamic mix of plenaries, breakouts, implementation workshops, specialized trainings, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and coordinated networking activities. It will also feature exciting tours of local projects in the Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Taos areas, and many other interesting case studies from throughout the region. There will be something for everybody, from veteran experts to smart-growth novices, with over 100 sessions and workshops. Learn from hundreds of speakers who cross disciplines to share insights, valuable tools and strategies for making smart growth a success in your community.

Plan to join us, and others, from across the U.S. next January for the smart growth event of the year! Visit www.NewPartners.org to get more conference details and to register for the conference!

ORGANIZATION TIP: ANNUAL APPEALS-RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

On October 16, Alliance leaders gathered for a Mutual Aid call to share best practices and experience with end-of-the-year appeals. The following tips are from our discussion and may help you as you conduct your asks for your organization.

In most cases, a test for success of a direct mail piece involves at least one hundred thousand pieces. This is above the threshold that most Alliance organizations have, so it can be difficult to test your message. However, soliciting feedback from current and potential members may help you test your message's success. Reaching out to experts in direct mail campaigns will also bring great ideas with regards to message. Here are some additional tips:

Segment your list of members and donors and personalize your message to increase your overall success with the ask. Segmentation also creates an opportunity to divide the workload, allowing you to handle the outreach efforts in the most efficient fashion. Additionally, including the amount of the last give from a member can help increase your success in raising the amount they may give.

Target your audiences. This is another way to segment your mailings. If you include, for example, a fact sheet about a particular area that demonstrates how your organization is making a difference or could make a difference. This makes the member or supporter aware of the impact their donation will have.

Use Technology. This is a key to the success of your member or supporter appeal. For example, keeping track of member or supporter data, including donation amounts, when they last donated, or the frequency of the donation, allows you to get the most out of your appeal. In addition, it also helps you to segment your list and target your ask to your audiences.

Want to know more? You can [download a recording of this call from our Resource Library](#).

THUNDERHEAD ALLIANCE SEEKS COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking is seeking a Communications Intern to help implement our communications strategy and rebranding project. This person will help shape and style the Alliance's online and print communications. This position will involve creative and engaging tasks that might include writing for and designing communication pieces, expanding our communications and networking channels, and developing marketing materials. This person must have excellent writing skills. Graphic design skills are a plus. The position is

not paid, but we are happy to work with any academic requirements to help an intern earn course credit for their work. Applications are due by November 30th. If you're interested in applying, visit <http://www.thunderheadalliance.org/jobs> for more details.

CALL TO ACTION!

We wanted to remind you of two important calls to action.

Submit Your Ready-to-Go Bike/Ped Projects

Thunderhead Alliance is working with America Bikes and T4 America on the Economic Stimulus Bill currently in development and we want to make certain that bicycle and pedestrian projects are included. We need your project ideas today by 5pm EST!

We are looking for bike / ped projects that are ready to be built beginning anytime in 2009. The idea is to fund projects that can be translated immediately into construction jobs. No education or marketing campaigns please – just physical construction and infrastructure projects. Please send a project name, city & state location, 2-3 sentence description max, total project cost, total budget request (can be 100% of cost).

If you don't get proposals to us by today's deadline – please still send it to us as soon as you can because this list will be maintained for other opportunities that will come up. Send your list of ready-to-go projects to jeff "at" thunderheadalliance.org.

Final Call for Signers: Impact the Next Transportation Bill

The Thunderhead Alliance and many state and local supporters of bicycling and walking have signed on to a letter the Safe Routes to School National Partnership is circulating. The letter asks Congress to build in health performance outcomes into the next transportation bill. Building in health outcomes will help create a strong foundation for bicycle and pedestrian projects, Safe Routes to School, and complete streets—all of which will help make progress on physical inactivity and obesity, safety, and poor air quality. Join over 100 organizations in letting Congress know how important this is by signing on! You can review the letter and the current list of signers at: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/national/45755/45848>. The deadline for signing on is Friday, October 31.

MEMBER NEWS

CBC Victory! California Passes Complete Streets Act

According to the [California Bicycle Coalition](#) (CBC), "The California Bicycle Coalition's biggest legislative success to date—the governor's signature on the CBC-sponsored Complete Streets Act—means Californians who ride bicycles for transportation can look forward to safer streets and roads.

Last month Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 1358, the Complete Streets Act, making California the first state in the nation to ensure that all local streets and roads accommodate the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders, as well as motorists. The bill was authored by San Francisco Assembly Member Mark Leno and co-sponsored by AARP California." [Get more of the story here.](#)

Plan Approved for New U.S. Bicycle Route System

In a major step forward for cycling, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has approved a plan for a U.S. Bicycle Route System. AASHTO represents America's state departments of transportation, which for decades have been very auto-oriented, noted Jim Sayer of [Adventure Cycling Association](#) (ACA), which has provided staff support for the project. "It's significant to have AASHTO's support for an initiative that will create what could be the largest official bike route network in the world," Sayer said. Now the next phase of hard work begins -- transforming the plan into actual interstate routes. Thunderhead groups will certainly play a role in this phase and can get more info at www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs or by contacting Ginny Sullivan of ACA at gsullivan@adventurecycling.org or 800/744-2453 x229.

Transportation Alternatives Launches RollingCarbon.org

According to New York City-based [Transportation Alternatives'](#) Street Beet, "With millions of people looking for simple and sensible ways to shrink their carbon footprint, a new Transportation Alternatives website, [RollingCarbon.org](#), is helping New Yorkers calculate the environmental impact of their daily trips around town.... Along with the website's carbon calculator, [RollingCarbon.org](#) is filled with carbon-saving tips, links to help folks green their commutes and a detailed report that explains the connection between commute mode and carbon output in easy to understand language. Check out [RollingCarbon.org](#) today."

Creative Idea: Engaging Members with Safety Sash Contest

The [Chicagoland Bicycle Federation](#) (CBF) will hold a "Safety Sash Contest" at their upcoming Member Meeting on November 17th. Their October Bike Bulletin tells members to, "get your creative juices flowing for the Member Meeting! Enter the safety sash contest by creating a reflective sash that can be worn on its own or attached to a shoulder strap bag." Members are encouraged to bring their sash to CBF's Member Meeting for display and a vote. The best sash will win \$75 and the runner-up wins \$25.

Thunderhead Alliance Organizations Are Hiring!

Our member organizations are hiring! Check out all of the fantastic job opportunities on the [Alliance Job Board](#). If your organization is hiring, be sure to [post your job to the job board](#).

Upcoming Events at Thunderhead Alliance

December 1-4: Training for Trainers, Chicago, IL - [more here](#)

December 11: Mutual Aid Call: Bike, Walk, Plan: How to Engage and Build Relationships with Planners - [more here](#)

We've Moved! Please Update Your Records

If you haven't done so already, we want to remind you that the Thunderhead Alliance for Biking and Walking has a new address and phone number. You can call the office at 202-449-9692. Mail should be sent to PO Box 65150, Washington DC 20035. And if you are in DC and want to stop by our new digs, we are at 1612K Street, Suite 802.

We Want Your News!

Thunderhead Alliance wants to publish your good news! Our coalition is our members and your peers want to hear about your success and innovations. Have you had a recent success? A winning campaign? A creative event? Has your organization used innovative

methods for attracting members or earning media attention? We want to know about it! [Tell us your news here.](#)

This monthly Thunderhead Alliance Weather Report is for the leaders of our member organizations and our supporters. The Thunderhead Alliance, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the only coalition of state and local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations working together to promote bicycling and walking in North American communities. Find more info at: www.thunderheadalliance.org.

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