

2009 National Bike Summit**Washington D.C.****March 10-12th****Conference Summary: By Matt Mihalevich, Trails Coordinator**

The 2009 National Bike Summit was a great success during this pivotal time for promoting the bicycle as a form of active transportation. With over 600 attendees, this year was the most attended summit in the 9 years since establishment. The conference began with an opening keynote dinner with comments from Andy Clark, President of the League of American Bicyclists and Denmark's Ambassador to the United States, Friis Arne Peterson. The featured speaker of the evening was Andreas Rohl, Director of the City of Copenhagen's Bicycle Program where about 40% of the 1 million people commute to work on a bicycle. He showed us how in Copenhagen, the bicycle is engrained in the culture and thought of as a primary mode of transportation, instead of an alternative form of transportation. To conclude the evening, the Honorable James L. Oberstar (D-MN), chair of the House Transportation Committee spoke of the importance of connected communities. Congressman Oberstar was the inspiration for the Safe Routes to School Program and he is very supportive of expanding this successful program.

The following day began with an inspirational opening general session featuring Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) who has been the leading voice for bicycle legislation and author of the recently approved Bicycle Commuters Act. Transportation Security, Ray LaHood followed Congressman Blumenauer reaffirming support for livable communities and active transportation. The Transportation Security Said "Bicycles are a critical part of a cleaner, greener future in American transportation, so keep those wheels spinning." The next speaker was Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) who is sponsoring bill HR 1443 for Complete Streets Legislation to require State Departments of Transportation to construct roads to accommodate all modes of transportation including bicycles, pedestrians, transit, as well as the traditional cars and trucks. Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL) spoke next about the importance of the America Bikes Agenda and supported increasing funding in the upcoming authorization of the Federal transportation bill. The current transportation law, The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) expires on September 30, 2009 by which time it must either be extended or re-written.



Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

After the morning general session, the rest of the day comprised of educational sessions covering current legislative items related to bicycles and alternative transportation. In addition to contributing to continuing education credits, these educational sessions were geared to provide a strong background of the issues in preparation for meeting with our congressional representatives on Thursday, March 12th. The first session I attended focused on climate change legislation and specifically the CLEAN-TEA initiative which

would allocate 10% of the anticipated funds from carbon capping regulations to sustainable transportation since 1/3 of the CO2 currently released is created from transportation. The next session provided a more detailed understanding of the Complete Streets legislation and the strategies to secure its inclusion in the new transportation bill. The final educational session focused on the success of the Safe Routes to School program. This Federal program provides funding to build trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, and to improve intersections near schools while also funding education, encouragement and enforcement programs. The panel discusses the initiatives to expand this successful program in the new transportation bill.

With the conclusion of the educational sessions, the attendees from each State gathered together to prepare for the following days meetings with members of congress. Appointments were set up in advance with Representative John Boozman, Senator Mark Pryor and Senator Blanche Lincoln. The Arkansas group included myself and Terry Easton from Fayetteville and Gordon Fisher, Coreen Frasier and Tom Ezell from central Arkansas. The next day our first meeting was with Representative John Boozman. He met with us in the Capital just outside the House of Representatives and we had a very productive meeting. He voiced support of the four bicycle initiatives but had concerns about funding shortages in the Highway Trust Fund. He was very friendly during the meeting and actually said he would like to visit for a tour of Scull Creek Trail. Representative Boozman is a member of the Bike Caucus.



Jason Ross, Representative John Boozman, Matt Mihalevich

Our next meeting was with Senator Blanch Lincoln's legislative correspondent, Patrick Daven. Patrick also voiced support for the bicycle initiatives but he did not have much feedback on the issues. Senator Lincoln is not a member of the Bike Caucus so we asked that she join the Caucus. Our last meeting was with Senator Mark Pryor's legislative assistant, Andrew Grobmyer. Again he expressed support for the bicycle agenda but we did not receive a lot of dialog on the issues. He took notes and said he will bring these items to the attention of Senator Pryor. We also asked him to consider joining the Bike Caucus.

The last day of the conference included a bike ride around Washington D.C. Approximately 80 people attended the ride even with freezing temperature and light snow. The ride was about 10 miles long circling around the City primarily using bike lanes and some trails. The 2009 Bike Summit was a very informative and eye opening experience. This was my first taste of the legislative process and I am confident that we were able to help promote bicycling as a viable form of transportation. With the leadership of the League of American Bicyclists and Bikes Belong together with the great support from many congressional representatives, the bicycle agenda has a strong voice in Washington as we prepare for to the new transportation bill.