



**Transportation  
For America**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**July 28, 2009**

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**Montana Citizen Groups and Organizations Join Call to Invest  
in 21st Century Transportation System**

**Helena** – Today organizations from across Montana joined in announcing the Montana Campaign of Transportation for America (T4 America) to help launch an aggressive statewide effort to advocate for fundamental changes to our federal transportation program.

The Montana coalition — including 33 groups and mayors — of the national campaign brought together organizational leaders to share why they are getting involved and their vision for the upcoming federal transportation bill, which they feel has the opportunity to improve health, increase access to essential services, and create jobs in Montana, while investing in a transportation system that makes Montana citizens healthier, safer, and more prosperous.

Today, speakers at a media conference shared their reasons for involvement in transportation issues and why they are getting involved in this campaign. Several speakers spoke in favor of T4 America's [Blueprint for Reform](#) and emphasized the critical importance of transformational change to the status quo, as soon as possible. Others underscored the importance of being bold and forward thinking in the new transportation bill, reminding attendees that, "we should strive for a truly transformational transportation bill."

"Expanded transportation choices including more walkable, bikeable and transit friendly communities that can increase opportunities for physical activity and reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and other health threats," shared Dr. Robert Shepard, Medical Director with New West Health Services. He added that "Communities that make walking, bicycling and riding the bus as easy and convenient as driving have healthier and more active populations, yet our transportation policy and design guidelines remain excessively focused on a single transportation mode, contributing to increasingly sedentary lifestyles, poorer air quality and associated health problems."

"Affordable, active, easy to use and flexible transportation options are essential for accessing health care services, establishing and maintaining social and family contacts, staying healthy and preserving independence and general well-being," said Sandra Lowry with the Area IV Agency on Aging. "People age 65 and older are the fastest growing demographic in the state — this means that an increasing proportion of our population, because of where they live and the lack of transportation alternatives such as public transportation and walkable communities — is at risk of becoming isolated and immobile if they are unable to get around."

(more)

"Access to jobs, schools, shopping, and critical community services is vital for Montanans living in small cities and towns, and rural communities, but all too often there aren't options for getting around, forcing families to drive long distances on poorly maintained roads to reach everyday destinations," said Barbara Stiffarm with Opportunity Link. "We need to preserve our existing transportation network and provide adequate transportation alternatives for our communities, otherwise we run the risk of leaving Montanans in these areas isolated from essential services and economic opportunity."

"Healthy transportation options and networks not only accommodate access and mobility needs but are a key determinant of quality of community life," said Melanie Reynolds with the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department and the Association of Montana Public Health Officials. "We need federal leadership to help make the critical link between health, safety, and transportation policies and create communities that promote active living, reduce pollution levels, increase accessibility, and ensure safety for all transportation users."

"We are hearing from community members and organizations across Montana that folks want healthy, clean, safe and sustainable transportation choices, both within and between communities; choices that will help get them to and from their jobs, affordable housing, healthcare and education and recreational opportunities," said C.B. Pearson, the Montana Representative for Transportation for America Campaign. "There is a growing demand for aggressive local, statewide and national policy, as well as, increased political will of local, statewide, and national elected officials to change the way we do transportation in Montana and across the country."

In the coming months, the Montana Transportation for America Campaign plans to work with the congressional delegation to ensure that we create an accountable, performance-based national transportation bill that gives Montanans and the rest of our country healthier options and makes our streets and communities safer.

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#### **ABOUT TRANSPORTATION FOR AMERICA**

Transportation for America is a broad coalition of housing, environmental, equal opportunity, public health, business, transportation and other organizations focused on creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century national transportation program. The coalition's goal is to build a modernized transportation system and healthy communities where people can live, work and play by aligning national, state, and local transportation policies with an array of issues like economic opportunity, climate change, energy security, health, housing and community development. [www.T4 America.org](http://www.T4 America.org)