

# Your Walking Papers

## Philly Walks

Spring 2000

Volume 1, Issue 2

### PHILLYWALKS LEADERSHIP ATTENDS PWA MEETING

On Feb. 18, Nancy Lavin and Debby Schaaf attended a meeting of the Partnership for a Walkable America (PWA). The Partnership is a coalition of groups that are interested in encouraging walking and promoting pedestrian safety. Some of the partners are the National Safety Council, WALKING Magazine, the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.

The meeting was in Philadelphia because Bob Rodgers, of Orth-Rodgers, Inc., who is currently the president of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, hosted it. ITE used to be the Institute of Traffic Engineers, and their name change signaled a broadening of interest to modes of transportation other than automobiles. ITE has published a Pedestrian Design Guide and an information report on Automated Enforcement of traffic laws. Rodgers said he plans to make a presentation on automated enforcement to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in late February.

One of PWA's main projects is the 3-year-old Walk Our Children to School Day. The idea of this annual event is to influence as many adults as possible to walk their children to school. The goals are to promote better health through walking, to promote pedestrian safety, and to promote more walkable communities by making people aware of the ways in which their environments encourage or discourage them from walking. Last year's Walk Our Children to School Day had an outstanding turnout, with participants from 159 cities and towns.

Planning for this year's event, which will

be on October 4, is just beginning. The PWA has developed a "Walkable America Checklist", which can be used in conjunction with Walk Our Children to School Day, or just to evaluate any neighborhood, although it is geared to parents and children. The checklist can be found on the Internet at [www.nsc.org/walk/wkcheck](http://www.nsc.org/walk/wkcheck). The PWA also gives awards each year for Walkable Communities and for successful pedestrian programs.

Thanks to Bob Rodgers for bringing the PWA to Philadelphia, and to Bob Ravelli, the City's Pedestrian Coordinator, for inviting Philly Walks.

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# US DOT HOSTS REGIONAL FORUM

## PhillyWalks Vice President on Livable Communities Panel

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In mid February the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Federal Transit (FTA) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administrations (NHTSA) sponsored a Regional Community-Building Forum in Philadelphia. Several PhillyWalks Officers and Board Members attended and Vice-President Peter Hecht served on the afternoon panel on Livable Communities and alternative transportation options.

The meeting brought together agency representatives, academics, professionals, and community individuals from across the state, Delaware, and Maryland. The bulk of community representatives were from Philadelphia and its suburbs. There were two sets of presentations by panelists, in the morning and afternoon. Along with Hecht, the afternoon panel included Maureen

Rush, head of the University of Pennsylvania's security department, and John Moffat of the State of Washington's Highway Safety Office.

The morning panels on mobility access and congestion brought examples of innovative ways people commute to jobs in the suburbs, with no hint that anyone saw any conflict with the notion of building existing urban communities. It is important that those who need jobs are able to get to them. However, the idea that SEPTA is dispensing its limited resources to create routes for businesses in suburbs with little consideration of how people move around in the city raised concerns with many of the community members at the forum who asked questions at the conclusion of the panels' discussion.

In the afternoon, the panel on safety concerns faced a room with far fewer people. PhillyWalks' Hecht, presented pedestrian's issues about safety. Two separate issues were discussed, the traditional one concerning conflicts with vehicles and bicycles, and the im-

*(Continued on page 3)*



# PHILLYWALKS TAKES A STAND TO KEEP BIKES OFF SIDEWALKS

On October 25th, 1999, Philly Walks presented a Forum on Pedestrian Safety featuring former Councilwoman, now President of Moore College, Happy Fernandez, as Moderator. The attendees included Panelists Councilman Frank Di Cicco from the Police Department (Lt. William Schmid and Lt. Frederick Corsino), Bob Ravelli from the Mayor's Office of Transportation, Sue McNamara, the Executive Director of the Bicycle Coalition of the Delaware Valley, and Donna Ferraro, President of Philadelphia Health Management Corporation.

The well-attended event started off with excited Dr. Fernandez posing problem situations to the Panelists and asking them for solutions. The audience questioned everything, including issues such as cars parked on sidewalks, bikes on sidewalks, increased dangers from large vans & SUV's; construction hazards (especially for people with dis-

abilities), requests for the City to utilize newly available technical assists for improving enforcement, and how to encourage better Transit options.

Questions on the subject of Bikes on Sidewalks were abundant, including "Isn't it illegal to ride a bike on the sidewalk?" Yes! It IS illegal!

Panelist Lt. Schmid conducted a program concerning Bikes on Sidewalks on Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>. He assigned his officers to issue Warnings

or Citations to those riding bikes on the sidewalks around the Rittenhouse Square area. Within a 5-hour period, there were 27 "Warnings" given to riders (22 were Penn students).

Philly Walks testified at Council's Budget Hearings in February to urge increased funding be given to the Philadelphia Police Dept. so programs such as the one described above can be expanded for the Education & Enforcement of current laws. We want to see these initiatives occur during the week as well as on weekends, on a regular and frequent basis, in all areas of the city where bikes and Pedestrians mix.

Philly Walks also testified before City Council on December 2nd, urging Council to enforce regulations stating that Sidewalk Cafes must allow 6 1/2 feet of unobstructed walkway on sidewalks.



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portance of active and lively neighborhoods for personal safety and comfort in choosing walking as a way of getting around. He also suggested ways of improving the pedestrian network by providing transit information at all stops and promoting shortcuts for pedestrians to make walks shorter and quicker. The drawback to the afternoon presentation was that those present during the morning who needed to hear about these issues and concerns had left after lunch so that the Philly Walks' presentation was the equivalent of preaching to the choir.

**PhillyWalks** is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania and operates as a project of the Clean Air Council. Our goals are:

- To work for a safe and functional pedestrian environment.
- To promote walking as an activity and a form of recreation.
- To educate government, transportation officials and the general public about pedestrian concerns.
- To create greater public awareness of pedestrian issues.

**PhillyWalks**

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## Cell Phones—Headaches for Pedestrians

Don't you just love those balmy spring days that make you want to go for a walk along Kelly Drive, or stroll to one of the enticing spots like Rittenhouse or Fitler Square that dot the Philadelphia cityscape? Ours is a beautiful city with so much to offer, as national organizations are beginning to learn as they visit Philadelphia and decide to book their conventions here.

Of course, nobody visits a city in search of solitude or quiet unless you head for some of the more untrammeled paths in Fairmount Park. We can, however, expect a degree of civility from others as we attempt to enjoy springtime in the City.

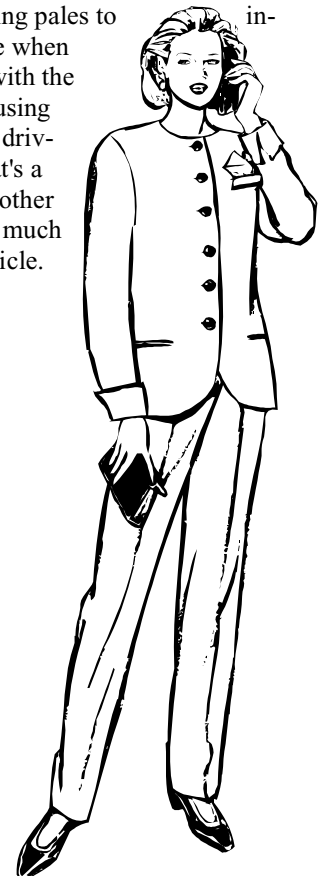
One offspring of the technological revolution that is disturbing to many city dwellers and that mitigates against the full enjoyment of spring in the City is the cell phone, whose numbers have proliferated at an alarming rate in the last decade. I have no quarrel with the use of cell phones in a genuine emergency, but it is positively unseemly to hear a young man screaming into his cell phone on Chestnut Street, "Hey, Eddie, didja see the Sixers last night? Allan had some kinda game, right? But

Geiger's comin' along too--lotsa rebounds. See ya." This kind of conversation is neither necessary nor appropriate on Chestnut Street, where older pedestrians have enough trouble negotiating the narrow sidewalks and ongoing construction without being constrained to avoid careless phone users more concerned with the Sixers' fate than with watching where they're going.

Or how about the fashionable young miss who feels compelled to call her best friend from the corner of 17th and Walnut to tell her about the amazing bargain she just got on a pair of Evan-Picone shoes? Really, darling, the news could wait until you get home or at least to the office. Oops, while you were chattering away, you failed to notice the pool of water that gathered in the curb cut after this morning's spring shower. I hope you weren't wearing your new shoes. Well, that's just one more piece of earthshaking news to impart to MaryLou on the cell phone.

Most of us simply don't choose to be privy to business or private conversations overheard on our downtown streets. We find most of the people who

use cell phones with little or no regard for others to be obnoxious but relatively harmless. They increase the likelihood of their bumping into someone, but the danger of using cell phones while walking pales to insignificance when compared with the hazards of using them while driving. But that's a topic for another day--and a much longer article.



## **CLIP & SAVE FOR PEDS**

### **To report Honor Boxes Blocking Sidewalks or Crosswalks**

Call Larry Robinson, in the Streets Department's Permits Unit, at 215.686.5500. Report the location of the box, the publication using the Box (and its phone number, if possible), and the specific problem with that particular Box. Please report the Box to PhillyWalks, 135 S. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA 19103-4219.

Or, you can report the problem directly to the publication using it. If the box is blocking the curb ramp, you can expect courteous and prompt action. Here are some phone numbers for publications that use honor boxes:

Info News: 610.292.6310	Auto Shopper: 1.800.433.9712
Dating: 610.664.2410	City Paper: 215.732.5542, x228
Philadelphia Weekly: 215.563.7400, x148	Rents Guide: 610.668.8440
Rents: 1.800.406.8577	Parents Guide: 215.343.8400
Carrier Pigeon: 215.677.0277	News Gleaner: 215.535.4274
Employment Guide: 1.800.750.5892	Weekend Classified: 215.646.5100
Philadelphia Business Journal: 215.236.5151	USA Today: 610.407.5012 or 610.631.2838
Apartment Guide: 610.834.9813	Apartments for Rent: 215.637.1600 or 610.631.2838
Metro Kids: 215.291.5560	Weekly Press: 215.222.2846

### **Reporting Construction Sites Blocking the Sidewalk**

Call the Streets Department's main office and the Licenses & Inspections district office listed below and ask for an inspector to visit the site to check their permit, to see if they have a right to block the right-of-way without providing alternative passage. Provide them with the following information:

- 1) The nearest intersection,
- 2) The work location (if not a corner), and
- 3) The name of the contractor, if possible (look for their sign on the construction fence or a vehicle)

### **City of Philadelphia Streets Department Main Office contacts:**

Larry Robinson, 215.686.5500

Pat O'Donald, 215.686.5524 or 5525

### **Licenses & Inspections Department District Offices:**

North District (5700 N. Broad St.), 215.685.2857

South District (11<sup>th</sup> & Wharton), 215.685.1575 (includes Center City)

East District (Rising Sun Ave. & Brenner) 215.685.0580

West District (43<sup>rd</sup> & Market), 215.685.7681

## **Join Us! PhillyWalks needs your support and involvement.**

PhillyWalks is the only Philadelphia organization devoted solely to advocating on behalf of pedestrians and the promotion walking. PhillyWalks is only as strong as its members make it...through their participation in the group's activities and through their financial support. Face it, everyone is a pedestrian at some point in his or her daily routine. So you need us as much as we need you!

\_\_\_\_\_ **Sign me up!** Enclosed is my dues/contribution in the amount:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5      \_\_\_\_\_ **\$20** (Suggested)      \_\_\_\_\_ \$35      \_\_\_\_\_ \$50      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer for PhillyWalks. Contact me at: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to join at this time but I have enclosed \$10 for a subscription to *Your Walking Papers*.

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# WHERE HAVE ALL THE SIDEWALKS GONE?

**side walk** *n.* A path for pedestrians, usually paved, along the side of a street.

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If you walk anywhere these days you may have to really search for that stretch of pavement defined by Webster as *your territory*. Indeed, unobstructed sidewalks in center city Philadelphia are as rare as mute politicians. It seems like just walking from one place to the next becomes a major operation that requires obstacle course resolution. Construction sites cordon off sidewalks with chain-link fencing while newspaper honor boxes block cross walks and wheelchair ramps. To this list of obstacles you can add newsstands, restaurant dumpsters, food, handbag and clothing vendors, hotel planters, and the latest usurpation of public space for private gain, sidewalk cafes. Philadelphia sidewalks have become the staging grounds for commerce.

City Council is currently debating the pros and cons of this “taking” of your space in the name of progress. Optimistically, this will result in new city ordinances that take pedestrian access and safety into account. But in the meantime, how about enforcing pedestrian-friendly laws that already exist, like the one about parking vehicles on sidewalks? Increasingly, it’s tough to walk a city street without encountering a car, truck, or sports utility vehicle using *your* sidewalk as a parking lot.

Parking on the sidewalk is illegal. Violators can and are ticketed by Parking Authority agents (all four wheels

on the sidewalk costs you \$25; half on, half off the sidewalk buys you a twenty minute reprieve before you’re fined). Rules to curb parking on the sidewalk are not arbitrary. They are designed to preserve public space and safety-- kids walking to school, parents pushing strollers, and the elderly. The visually impaired and wheel-chair bound should not have to make judgment calls about how to get around cars parked on the sidewalk. And under no circumstances should pedestrians be forced to use the streets as sidewalks!

In addition, cars leave sidewalks stained with leaking oil and other fluids and often crack the sidewalk material with their weight. This can be a real financial burden to residents who are responsible for maintaining the sidewalk abutting their home or business - and a nuisance to everyone else who simply wants to enjoy a clean city with safe sidewalks.

PhillyWalks would like to put a halt to the practice of sidewalk parking. Parking Authority enforcers catch many of the offenders but they cannot be everywhere at once. Further, there are small businesses in center city that seem to have laid perpetual claim to the sidewalk in front of their building for private parking. The reduced enforcement on weekends makes some streets particularly menacing for pedestrians because they are forced to walk in the street, occasion-

ally for blocks at a time. It is clear that ticketing offenders is only partially effective in keeping sidewalks free of cars. Repeat offenders must either consider fines the cost of doing their business or find ways to beat them.

Perhaps a better way to discourage this thoughtless behavior would be to “label” the cars of scofflaws with a boldly lettered fluorescent 4"x 8" strip warning the driver that “**THIS CAR IS ILLEGALLY PARKED.**” The strip, issued along with a citation, could be placed on the driver’s side window with an adhesive that would make it difficult but not impossible to remove. By the way, similar stickers are already used by the Philadelphia Parking Authority to identify abandoned cars and those that have been “booted” for one reason or another.

Let PhillyWalks know what you think. The pedestrian’s world is narrowing in Philadelphia. Help PhillyWalks reclaim the sidewalk.

# PHILADELPHIA TO HOST 2000 PRO BIKE/PROWALK CONFERENCE

The biannual ProBike/ProWalk Conference will be held in Philadelphia this year, at the Loew's Hotel (the former PSFS building at 12th and Market) from September 5th to 9th.

This is the 11th conference in a series that dates back to 1980. It is the largest conference in the United States. It is organized by the National Center for Bicycling and Walking (NCBW), formerly the Bicycle Federation of America and the Pedestrian Federation of America. The last two conferences have been in Portland, Maine and Santa Barbara, California, so in coming to Philadelphia the conference attendees will experience a very different setting. We can show them what a walkable city looks like, although we also have plenty of examples of areas that need improvement.

According to the NCBW, the focus of this year's meeting will be on actions

that are necessary to make communities and neighborhoods more walkable and bicycle friendly and how agencies and advocates can make these things happen. "We want to explore how people are creating real change and spread these successes from community to community."

Attendees at the conference will include transportation engineers and planners, people involved in the promotion of health and safety, and pedestrian and bicycling advocates. The NCBW has announced the following preliminary list of program subject areas and topics.

- Land Use and Community Planning
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Planning
- Transportation Facility Design and Maintenance
- Traffic Safety and Injury Prevention

- Advocacy for Bicycling and Walking
- Public Health and Physical Activity
- Trails, Greenways, and Open Space
- Government Policy and Legislation
- Professional Skill Development

Several Philly Walks Board members will be involved in planning for the conference. In addition, we have been asked to hold a social event during the conference with AmericaWALKS, the national umbrella organization for local pedestrian advocacy groups.

Stay tuned for further news about ProBike/ProWalk 2000!

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The logo for PhillyWalks, featuring the text "PhillyWalks" in a white serif font inside a black oval.

A PROJECT OF CLEAN AIR COUNCIL

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