
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MDOT AND PARTNERS HOST WALKTOBER TO
PROMOTE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, ACCESS AND HEALTH**

Monthlong Celebration Includes Webinar Series, Walk Day Maryland on October 7

HANOVER, MD – The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) is partnering with state and local agencies, nonprofits and communities across Maryland to host Walktober, a monthlong series of activities and virtual webinars in October promoting the state’s official exercise: walking. Walktober features the October 7 celebration of the sixth annual Walk Maryland Day, as well four webinars focusing on pedestrian safety, health and walking as a commuting option.

The webinars – or “walkinars” – are being held online, rather than in-person events, to encourage safe practices as Maryland continues its COVID-19 recovery. Residents are invited to sign up for the 90-minute walkinars, which feature local, state and national speakers.

“Walking is not only our state exercise, but it’s been an important strategy for Marylanders dealing with the challenges of COVID-19,” said Governor Larry Hogan. “While many people have been teleworking and following ‘safer-at-home’ advice, they’ve rediscovered walking for health, recreation and overall well-being.”

As part of the statewide focus on walking, walkable communities and pedestrian safety, MDOT is hosting a website, mdot.maryland.gov/walktober, with information about Walktober and Walk Maryland Day, as well as registration for the webinar series.

The annual Walk Maryland Day on Wednesday, October 7, encourages Marylanders to spend part of that day taking a walk. Walk leaders across the state will help lead registered walks following COVID-19 protocols, including social distancing and face-covering requirements. Participants are also invited to register walks at locations of their choice, alone or with other registered partners. Marylanders can become a Walk Maryland Day “Sole Mates” by registering to join one of the official walks across the state.

The four walkinars, scheduled for 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Thursdays, October 1, 15, 22 and 29, are tailored to pedestrian enthusiasts, advocates, planners and residents. Panelists will share resources to help build, strengthen and sustain partnerships, and share new tools and technologies being used across the country to promote pedestrian access and safety. The series is open to all, and provides American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) with 1.5 Certification Maintenance credits per session to maintain certification.

“The walkability of our communities is a critical component to Maryland’s transportation mission,” said MDOT Secretary Greg Slater. “Events such as Walktober, where we’re bringing different voices to the table, encouraging action and heightening awareness, are important as we work together to improve safety and deliver innovative solutions across Maryland.”

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Walkinar participants will learn about the benefits of walking and walkability, and about a wide range of state and national resources available to improve the safety and access to safe walking in their communities. The series includes:

- **October 1, “What Can We Do?”**
Panelists will discuss key resources and initiatives at the state and national level to promote pedestrian safety, access and wellness. Participants include Marty Baker, Deputy Director of Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning for MDOT; Danielle Arigoni, Director of Livable Communities for AARP; and Ian Thomas, State and Local Program Director for the nonprofit America Walks.
- **October 15, “Pedestrian Infrastructure, Safety and Health.”**
This webinar highlights MDOT pedestrian safety initiatives, as well as Maryland Department of Health (MDH) efforts to encourage people of all ages and abilities to make walking part of a wellness plan. Panelists include Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian-Bicycle Safety Program Manager for the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration’s Maryland Highway Safety Office; Kandese Holford, Regional Planner for Montgomery and Frederick counties at the MDOT State Highway Administration; and a lead representative of the MDH’s Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control.
- **October 22, “New Trends and Technologies to Support Walkability and Walking”**
This talk focuses on tools and technologies that can help communities develop safe infrastructure and identify areas to target for access improvements. Panelists are Hank Greenberg, Director of AARP Maryland; Anat Caspi, Principal Scientist at the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering and Director of the Taskar Center for Accessible Technology; Victor Juan Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer of WaBu; and Dan Hudson, Trail Planner for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- **October 29, “Walking the Walk of Maryland’s Pedestrian Agenda.”**
Panelists will discuss actions being taken across Maryland to integrate walking into residents’ daily lives and commutes. Panelists include Cara Rozaieski, Director of Prevention and Healthy Communications at the Wicomico County Health Department; Tracey Greene Gordy, Senior Regional Planner at the Lower Eastern Shore Regional Office for the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP); Sandra Brecher, Chief of Commuter Services for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s Office of Transportation Policy; and Chris Eatough, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the Howard County Office of Transportation.

In addition to various MDOT units, MDH, DNR, MDP, AARP Maryland, America Walks and agencies in Montgomery, Howard, Harford and Wicomico counties, other agencies and nonprofits participating in Walktober include the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Department of Parks and Recreation, Maryland Department of Commerce, the University of Maryland Extension, Horizon Foundation and Garrett Trails.

Maryland named walking as the official state exercise in October 2008. For more on Walktober or to register for events, go to mdot.maryland.gov/walktober. Follow event updates on Twitter [@WalkCycleMD](https://twitter.com/WalkCycleMD) and [@MDOTNews](https://twitter.com/MDOTNews), on Facebook at facebook.com/WalkCycleMD or facebook.com/CommuterChoiceMaryland/ and on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/in/commuterchoicemd/.

What Partners are Saying About Walktober

“October is perfect weather for walking in Maryland, and MDOT SHA has worked diligently to identify and implement infrastructure improvements that make walking a safe transportation alternative. Walktober is an opportunity to refocus on pedestrian safety and remind motorists and pedestrians of their shared responsibility to make smart choices on our roadways. During this time of year when daylight hours decrease and pedestrian visibility becomes more challenging, it is imperative that motorists stay alert, park their phones, obey posted speed limits and stop for pedestrians. MDOT will continue to enhance pedestrian safety by providing infrastructure that influences good driving behavior and encourages safe pedestrian travel.”

- **Tim Smith, Administrator, MDOT State Highway Administration**

“As Marylanders across the state are out enjoying Walktober, we want to remind everyone on the roads that we all have a responsibility to keep each other safe. Drivers should remain vigilant and stop for pedestrians, and pedestrians should use crosswalks and wait for the appropriate signals. No matter how we choose to get to our destination, let’s all get there safely.”

- **Chrissy Nizer, Administrator, MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration
and Governor Larry Hogan’s Highway Safety Representative**

“Walktober is a fun way to get outdoors to travel around Maryland by foot and explore Maryland's trail system that is second to none.”

- **Kelly Schulz, Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce**

“As we have been reminded this year, spending time outdoors is essential to our health and well-being. During Walktober, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources encourages every Marylander to walk in their nearest park or local green space. Participants are also invited to explore Maryland’s state-owned public lands which offer more than 1,000 miles of trails for everything from a light stroll to a serious hike – including ADA-accessible and family and senior-friendly options – to help you experience and connect with our state’s beautiful natural resources.”

- **Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources**

“The health benefits of walking are clear and indisputable, and it is an exercise that people of all ages are able to enjoy. The Maryland Department of Health is proud to participate in Walktober 2020 to support the health and welfare of all of our employees.”

- **Robert R Neall, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health**

“As we move through this public health crisis, it is important to continue to take care of ourselves in body and spirit. Walking is one way to do this and it is affordable for everyone. Walktober is a wonderful event which combines fun competition and a truly important health goal, and we look forward to being a part of it.”

- **Dr. Jinlene Chan, Deputy Secretary of Public Health, Maryland Department of Health**

“Promoting health and wellness in our state's communities is a priority for the University of Maryland Extension. We're excited to partner with MDOT to enhance the safety of our neighborhoods, to educate pedestrians and drivers, and help make Maryland a safer, healthier place for everyone.”

- **Jinhee Kim, Family & Consumer Sciences Program Leader, University of Maryland Extension**

“As a promoter of livable and walkable communities, the Maryland Department of Planning is proud to support Walktober. This is literally a step in the right direction for building healthier communities and increasing personal health.”

- **Rob McCord, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning**