

# National Bike Summit Report to Mountain State Wheelers

## March 19, 2013

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Thanks to the financial support of the Mountain State Wheelers, I attended the National Bike Summit, March 4-6, 2013, themed "Bicycling Means Business." I was the only representative from West Virginia, but Dennis Strawn provided excellent scheduling support and guidance. Following is a report of my Summit experience including a synopsis of the Summit program and Capitol Hill lobby day. My experience was extremely positive, networking with attendees from Louisville, Pittsburgh, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nevada, and more. The lineup of speakers was superb, including USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, New York City Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, and other advocates, marketers, and researchers.



I tended toward the MAP-21 funding breakout sessions, hearing about great efforts to maintain pre-MAP-21 funding levels and how to utilize MAP-21 funding mechanisms, including Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP; which has actually *increased* in MAP-21) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. Over the last 5 years, WV has spent **no** HSIP money and 0.6% (\$1.55 per capita; 4th lowest nationally) of ALL federal transportation funding on ped/bike infrastructure! My belief based on these data, my Summit experience, and my own advocacy work in Morgantown is that *WV should have a statewide ped/bike coalition with a paid director* to coordinate and unify advocacy groups from around the state, assist advocates in identifying ped/bike *transportation* (not rec trails) projects and funding sources, educate advocates on the funding process (MPOs, WVDOH, etc), assist groups in promoting bicycle tourism, and "lobby" state leaders on ped/bike-friendly policies.

My lobbying meetings went smoothly, meeting with staffers for all Congresspersons except Representative Capito, with whom I met directly. Our three "asks" for the day were: 1) to support a separate ped/bike safety performance measure in MAP-21 by signing a "dear colleague" letter from Oregon Rep Blumenauer to USDOT Sec LaHood (House)///support nomination of Sally Jewell for Secretary of the Interior (Senate); 2) join the Congressional Bike Caucus; and 3) come to visit a project or event in WV. All meetings were generally positive, though non-committal. I followed-up with an email to each one week post-visit but **still need to identify a project or event to visit, hopefully for Bike Month.**

My impressions of each meeting were as follows:

1) Rep Rahall - met with Rachel Meyer (Legislative Assistant), from Madison, WI. Only 2 staffers in office due to snow so meeting was brief and a bit scattered. Thanked for co-sponsorship of Surface Transportation Safety Act (HR825) with Rep Petri. Will follow-up with Kate Denman (Deputy Chief of Staff) to schedule a visit.

2) Rep Capito - met with Rep Capito and Legislative Director Adam Tomlinson. She really resonated with the safety aspect as a friend or relative (can't remember which) was killed by a fire engine while she was walking across an intersection! She agreed to read through the Dear Colleague letter and promised to join the bike caucus (and compete with Rep Rahall)! She was really excited to hear that so many women cyclists attended the summit. I asked her to attend an event, potentially a ribbon cutting in late 2013/early 2014 on a new section of Kanawha River trail. She has participated in 4H fundraising rides in the past. I will follow-up with Adam to schedule.

3) Sen Manchin - met with Shane Barker (Appropriates & Projects Advisor). He commutes by bike in good weather. He is mostly involved with community development grants, including some in the more rural areas of the state. These also have walkability & bikability components. No specifics on support/not Ms. Jewell's nomination. Shane offered to help work on community development grants. Invited Sen Manchin to Appalachian Spring Spectacular ride on May 6 in Morgantown, and will follow-up to schedule.

4) Sen Rockefeller - met with Pat Bond (Legislative Assistant) who has a Capitol Bikeshare membership! He expressed some pessimism re: Sally Jewell's nomination because of Alaska senator that has indicated she will not support any nominee that does not support a "road through the woods" in Alaska. Invited Sen Rockefeller to Appalachian Spring Spectacular ride on May 6 in Morgantown, and will follow-up to schedule. Pushed the public health & physical activity aspect of transportation spending on ped/bike infrastructure. Pat told me that Sen Rockefeller is almost exclusively focused on getting funding for Corridor H, however.

5) Rep McKinley - met with Cory Toth (Senior Legislative Aide). Cory indicated that Rep McKinley does like to ride, especially on Heritage Trail in Wheeling but he doesn't wear a helmet. I thanked Cory for McKinley's support of downtowns as sponsor of HR 5930 (Preserving America's Downtown & Heritage Act - historic building preservation money), and made link to the need for wise ped/bike infrastructure to further support our historic downtowns. Stressed the bike tourism and economic benefits of bikeable, walkable towns as we compete for young talent. Cory didn't commit the Congressman to anything but I did push the "competition" angle to get McKinley on the Bike Caucus (with Rahall & Capito would make all 3 state Representatives). Will follow-up to schedule for an event.