I want to thank Secretary LaHood and Representative Oberstar for hosting this tour and inviting the national Complete Streets Coalition to participate.

The National Complete Streets Coalition is working for the adoption and implementation of Complete Streets policies that ensure that roads are designed, built, and operated for the safety of everyone using them – whether driving, riding a bicycle, catching a bus, walking, or using a wheelchair. The Coalition is made up of groups representing users of the transportation system, such as America Bikes and AARP, as well as transportation practitioner organizations, such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the American Planning Association, and groups with a wider interest in better transportation, such as Trust for America’s Health and the National Association of Realtors. Together we work to spread the word about the benefits of Complete Streets and help communities get it right when they move to adopt a policy.

Tomorrow, I am conducting a Complete Streets Workshop at the Duluth City Hall along with respected traffic engineer John LaPlante. We will be working with planners, engineers, elected officials, and community members to draft a Complete Streets policy to guide the city in transforming its road system into one that welcomes people of all ages and abilities who are traveling by foot, bicycle and public transportation as well as by car.

Fit City Duluth and the Duluth Complete Streets Task Force want a Complete Streets policy in part to help people get physical activity as part of their daily lives – an essential step in fighting the obesity epidemic. They are not alone. With support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, we have conducted Complete Streets workshops in Ramsey County, Dakota County, Moorhead, Red Wing, Hennepin County, Rochester, and for the annual meeting of Minnesota MPOs. Hennepin, Rochester, St. Paul, and the town of Albert Lea have all adopted Complete Streets policies in the last year. The Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition is working on a draft Complete Streets bill to introduce into the state legislature this session.

This thirst for a different outcome from transportation investments is happening across the United States. Forty-two jurisdictions adopted some form of Complete Streets policy in 2009, including the states of Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, New Jersey, North Carolina and Wisconsin. This summer, we surpassed 100 policies at all levels nation-wide.
At the most fundamental level, these communities are seeking safer roads, especially the arterials that are often federally funded but often offer pedestrians no more than a goat path trampled in the grass. These roads are the location of a majority of pedestrian deaths, as documented in the Transportation for America report, Dangerous by Design. The evidence that multi-modal planning results in safer streets is irrefutable. For example, installing sidewalks results in a crash reduction factor for pedestrians of 88%. Road diets that reduce automobile lanes and make room for bicycles result in a crash reduction factor of 30 to 50 percent – for ALL modes.

At its most advanced, Complete Streets results in vibrant streets that help reduce reliance on automobiles, raise home values, help revitalize commercial centers, and contribute to community livability. Charlotte, North Carolina, recently won a Smart Growth award from the EPA for its Complete Streets policy, which is a compliment to its strong commitment to light rail – a commitment it shares with the Twin Cities. Since the introduction of the policy in 2007, Charlotte has transformed sixteen thoroughfares and eleven intersections, added miles of sidewalks and bike lanes, and has more than 70 additional projects pending. This is all without a new funding source, but simply an expression of a change in priorities put in motion when the city’s leadership adopted the Complete Streets approach.

From Charlotte to Bloomington, Minnesota, we have heard two common complaints: state standards and practices that often dominate local road projects do not allow a Complete Streets approach, and federal funding criteria do not reward the creation of Complete Streets. The authorization of the federal transportation bill should include a strong provision requiring that federally funded road projects provide for safe travel by everyone using the corridor, and emphasizing the repair and retrofit of our existing infrastructure. The Coalition is gaining co-sponsors for the Complete Streets Act of 2009, and wants to see its provisions included in the transportation authorization.

The Complete Streets movement, with local Coalitions springing up across the country, is part of a wider desire to let go of a narrowly focused and outdated transportation investment system. While making individual communities more livable, Complete Streets and other reforms are needed to meet the national goal of creating a 21st century transportation system that will lead to a stronger economy, greater energy security, a cleaner environment, and a healthier America for all of us.

Thank you.