

The Transatlantic Workshops on Active Transportation

September 27 --October 2, 2009
Oakland, California --Portland, Oregon

European Delegation Biographies

Adelheid Byttebier

Adelheid Byttebier was an elected member of the Brussels regional parliament from 1999 until 2009, representing the Green party Groen!. Ms. Byttebier was also Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Equal Opportunities in the Flemish government (2003-2004). Before starting her political career in 1993, she worked at the European level in environmental and social organizations for 10 years; amongst others as chairperson of YEE (Youth and Environment Europe) and general coordinator of CC-EYE (Coordination Committee of European Youth Exchanges), where she organized training for intercultural learning.

Ms. Byttebier obtained a Masters in Sociology from the Brussels University VUB and has worked as a social worker. She also has a special interest in environmental issues, nature preservation and issues related to traffic and pollution. As a result of her political work, local authorities received financial incentives to open one way roads for cyclists. Her last act in the Brussels Parliament was to encourage the regional governments of Flanders and Brussels to develop cyclist highways. As a politician, Ms. Byttebier focuses particularly on the development of economically depressed areas, which, despite their assets (many young people, shops, a lively atmosphere), face entrenched challenges like poverty, unemployment and a lack of development. She believes these neighborhoods are the key to a vibrant and prosperous Brussels.

Niels Jensen

Niels Jensen is a senior traffic planner working with cycling policy, strategies and planning in the Traffic Department of Copenhagen. He is educated as a landscape architect, starting his career in The Danish Cyclist Federation in the late 1970's. Has worked with cycling research projects at The Danish Technical University, has contributed to national Danish cycle planning and has been involved in European Union projects on zero and low emission vehicles as well as cycling benchmarking. He has been the coordinator of a Car Free Cities conference and a Velo City Conference in Copenhagen.

Gilles Vesco

Gilles Vesco is the Vice-President of the Greater Lyon Urban Community and Member of the City Board of Lyon in charge of Urban Mobility. He attended business school in Paris and also holds a master's degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne University in Paris. He began his professional career at the "Medecins Sans Frontières" headquarters in Paris, where he was in charge of the fundraising; later he worked as field officer in east Africa. He joined the private sector as an executive officer. Mr. Vesco later joined the public sector as chief of staff of the President of the General Council of Rhône, a French Senator now a minister in the French government.

Hans Voerknecht

Hans Voerknecht is the International Coordinator for Fietsberaad, a subsidiary of the Dutch Knowledge Center on Traffic and Transport (KpVV), which is a knowledge center for expertise on cycling and related subjects. Fietsberaad runs the website www.bicyclecouncil.org and has a group of enthusiastic international cycling ambassadors to spread the word on Dutch bicycle policy abroad.

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

Prior to joining Fietsberaad, Mr. Voerknecht worked in the province of South Holland in the field of environment before switching to mobility management. He was the project leader of a €10 million European project (OPTIMUM-2) with partners in the UK and the Netherlands which sought to limit the use of cars for commuting, business and social and recreational activities by providing motorists attractive alternatives. He later was the project manager of a working group that created legislation for compulsory mobility management for businesses in the Netherlands.

Mr. Voerknecht completed high school in Zwolle and graduated from the University of Groningen with a degree in Economics in 1986. He has three sons and enjoys skiing, skating, cycling (of course), sailing and mountain climbing. He is a tutor of mountaineering for boys ages 13-19 every autumn.

Geert-Pieter Wagenmakers

Geert-Pieter Wagenmakers is a senior advisor to the Chamber of Commerce of Amsterdam on issues related to traffic and transportation. With more than 200,000 companies in the Trade Register, the Chamber of Commerce for Amsterdam is the largest of the 12 Chambers of Commerce in the Netherlands.

Prior to joining the Chamber, Mr. Wagenmakers served as the Secretary-Director of Amsterdam Port Consultants, a private consulting company for ports in the Netherlands and throughout the world. A graduate of the University of Amsterdam with a degree in Dutch law and sea and transport law, Mr. Wagenmakers has also worked as a freelance political and economic consultant, working with private and public entities on transportation issues.

The GMF Transatlantic Cities Network

The Transatlantic Cities Network (TCN), the flagship initiative of GMF's Comparative Domestic Policy program, provides a framework for the exchange of information about innovative policies, best practices, and local policy challenges among a diverse network of policymakers, practitioners, and civic leaders who are well-positioned to put new ideas into practice in their home cities. The active, ongoing exchanges that take place between TCN representatives are supplemented by regular study tours, issue specific workshops, seminars and researched multimedia web content.

The Transatlantic Cities Network is unique among urban policy networks in that its representatives, who serve as the organizing force for their cities' participation, are leaders in their communities with significant experience crafting, implementing, and influencing effective policies addressing challenges common to many cities. Through strong personal and professional networks, TCN representatives have the capacity to connect innovative ideas and solutions with the individuals who can implement them.

The TCN currently includes representatives from twenty-five core cities in the United States and Europe, which are selected to participate in the TCN based on their potential to share innovative policy solutions in certain key policy areas, as well as to benefit from the experiences of other cities in different policy areas.

The TCN focuses on four policy areas, within which some TCN cities have implemented innovative policy solutions, while others name that area as a particular challenge. As with the network as a whole, this diversity of experience creates the greatest potential for valuable exchange and learning. The TCN's four current policy focus areas are: The Educated City, The Affordable City, The Sustainable City, and The Integrated City. These four policy focus areas encompass key challenges facing cities in the TCN and across the United States and Europe, including mobility, affordable housing, workforce training, and sustainable economic development.