Cities and counties across Minnesota are working on creating master walk and bike plans; updating municipal plans to include “complete streets” with sidewalks and crosswalks; increasing access to connected walking and bicycling networks; connecting and promoting trail systems; and collaborating on projects that improve walkability and bikeability in communities.

SHIP stories

Healthy Living Trail in Waite Park

Beginning in 2011, Waite Park residents now have the opportunity for more physical activity and healthy living while at the same time learning about cancer prevention.

The Harold P. Nelson Healthy Living Trail in the city of Waite Park (population 6,715) in Stearns County received a jumpstart from the Statewide Health Improvement Program. The trail is named in memory of the trail donor, a former Waite Park resident who died of cancer. It is a “Healthy Living Trail” because it is designated as smoke free and includes features that encourage healthy behaviors with a focus on cancer prevention: trail exercise equipment, educational stations discussing cancer prevention tips and herbs and plants that are good for health and the environment.

Beginning with the donations to pave the trail, the entire project has been a venture of local partnerships. Donated services and products have been provided by Thomsens Greenhouse & Garden Center and local master gardeners, Minnesota School of Business Interactive Media and Graphic Design program, and Auto Trim & Sign, Martin Marietta Materials, and the City of Waite Park.

The trail has been a hit, and the best may be yet to come. It is anticipated that use will increase as the St. Cloud Area Rail Legacy (STARail) Museum, planned for Third Street near the trail, is built and becomes a local historical attraction.

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The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) works to improve health through better nutrition, increased physical activity and decreased commercial tobacco use and exposure. Find out more at www.health.state.mn.us/ship.