

Minnesota Department of Health
Statewide Health Improvement Program



Active Transportation

**Guide to Implementation
and Evaluation**

Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013

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Active Transportation

Implement policies and practices that create active communities by increasing opportunities for non-motorized transportation (walking and bicycling).

Description and Scope

Active Transportation provides safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity, which are commonly referred to as active living. Active living integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or bicycling for transportation. Active Transportation policies and practices in community design, land use, site planning, and facility access are proven effective to increase levels of physical activity. A number of specific policies and practices that create active communities are those that support non-motorized transportation.

Outcomes

Standardized outcomes for required strategies are still under development. Strategies will be measured primarily on policy, systems and environmental change outcomes and health behavior change outcomes and then linked through literature projections to health care cost savings.



Requirements

Staff with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to:

- Engage and collaborate with diverse community partners and stakeholders to form and Active Living Advisory Group to meet at least quarterly.
- Identify facilitators and challenges to increasing opportunities for non-motorized transportation.
- Communicate, translate, and summarize public health issues in terms of inequities or access as well as other ethical, political, scientific, or economic determinations associated with active transportation and/or physical activity effectively.
- Coordinate the efforts of local and community organizations to create local policy and environmental changes.
- Plan, implement and evaluate policy, systems, and environment changes supporting active transportation by completing Bicycle or Walk Friendly Community tool to identify baseline and/or next steps.

Target Populations

- Communities with a high prevalence of people living in affordable housing and low-income housing and limited access to employment, services, health care, etc.
- Communities with a high prevalence of older adults with limited access to services.
- Communities with low walk scores (www.walkscore.com)

Recommended Partners

- Business Organizations and Leaders
- Community Organizations and Leaders
- Elected and Appointed Officials
- Health Department Staff
- Law Enforcement
- Municipal, Tribal, County, or Regional Staff that work on the following:
 - Housing
 - Community Development
 - Economic Development
 - Planning
- Parks and Recreations
- Public Safety Staff and Administrators
- School Staff and Groups
- Transportation and Public Works

Financial Guidance

MDH will provide financial guidance for this strategy at a later date.

Planning and Assessment

Planning and assessment are critical aspects of SHIP as they prepare both grantees and community partners for implementation of evidence-based strategies. SHIP grantees must complete certain steps prior to active transportation implementation including: partners engaged and committed, active living advisory groups created, baseline assessments conducted and action plans developed.

Activities

1. Review existing community planning documents to become familiar with the current status of community design, land use, transportation, and recreation facility issues. Planning documents could include a community comprehensive plan, master plans, pedestrian plans, bicycle plans, or multimodal plans.
2. Form an Active Living Advisory Group. Invite and engage staff working in planning, transportation, public works, housing, parks and recreation, public safety, education, economic development, tourism, and health functions for the community.
3. Conduct a community assessment of non-motorized transportation policies, practices, and facilities. Complete the Walk Friendly Community Application. Consider completing additional assessments, including the Bicycle Friendly Community Application, Walk Friendly Community Application, Active School Neighborhood Checklist, and Green Step Cities best practices to further evaluate opportunities for transportation and land use supportive of physical activity.
4. Develop or update an active community action plan as a result of the assessment. This may include priorities in non-motorized transportation, new facilities, access to existing facilities combined with promotion of the facilities. Finalize the action plan to clearly identify next steps.
5. Include an assessment of staff training needs. Work with staff and Active Living Advisory Group members to attend training opportunities based on needs identified in the assessment and prioritized in the action plan.
6. Work with municipalities/tribal governments to adopt policies or resolutions that support active transportation and increase non-motorized access to destinations.

Potential Milestones

- Grantees convene stakeholders at the local level to form Active Living Advisory Group
- Subset of Active Living Advisory Group attends Safe Routes to School, Walkable Community Workshop, or Smart Cycling for Professionals training
- Active Living Advisory Group completes assessment of active transportation
- Active Living Advisory Group creates or updates community action plan that identifies priority areas

Implementing Active Transportation

- 1. Develop a community pedestrian, bicycling, or multimodal transportation plan if one does not already exist**
 - A. Include an updated map of existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- 2. Identify upcoming transportation and land use projects**
 - A. Work in partnership with MnDOT, county and city engineers, tribal officials, and municipal land use planners for opportunities to incorporate active transportation.
 - B. Support and encourage MnDOT, county and city engineers, tribal officials, and municipal land use planners to implement policies that accommodate active transportation and context sensitive designs.

- 3. Develop design plans and funding proposal for non-motorized transportation infrastructure projects**
 - A. This is based on action plan recommendations, such as for new or retrofitted sidewalks, trails, or crosswalks.

- 4. Implement strategic promotion activities**
 - A. Some examples are Bike Walk to Work Week, Bike Walk to School Day, and Open Streets events

Potential Milestones

- Active transportation community action plan is incorporated into related comprehensive planning documents or resolutions
- Additional resources are identified to move toward implementation of community action plan priorities
- Action plan priorities are built or implemented

Sustaining Change Activities

1. Continue to **leverage strategic promotion activities** to garner support for active transportation efforts.
 - A. For example, bike-walk to work week, safe routes to school, increased law enforcement efforts, etc.
2. Periodically **review upcoming transportation and land use projects** for opportunities to support active transportation.
3. **Identify or develop funding streams** for active transportation projects or educational activities.
4. Periodically **update action plan** to reflect progress and new goals

Potential Milestones

- Active transportation community action plan pieces are effectively implemented
- Plan to evaluate implemented action plan pieces conducted
- Implementation pieces of community action plan are assessed and evaluated

Evaluation Tools

This section is currently under development. MDH will be providing standardized tools for the evaluation of required strategies at a later date.

Appendix A: Planning Resources

Communities for a Lifetime

- www.mnlifetimecommunities.org

Communities for a Lifetime provides information, resources and assistance to people engaged in collaborative action to improve the quality of life in Minnesota communities for people of all ages and abilities. As Minnesota communities assess the implications of a historic aging population, communities for a lifetime is a framework to help communities and their residents plan for the future. Many communities recognize the application of communities for a lifetime strategies not only benefit older adults, even if community improvements are initiated with aging residents in mind, but all residents.

Community projects that improve accessibility, provide alternative forms of transportation, increase housing variety and affordability, and encourage flexible and supportive employment opportunities, benefit younger adults, working families, people with temporary or permanent disabilities, and older adults alike. Possible stakeholders interested in utilizing Communities for a Lifetime to support active transportation include: regional area agencies on aging and elder care development partnerships, transportation staff, safety coalitions, schools, chambers of commerce.

Minnesota Housing – Green Communities

- www.mnhousing.gov
- www.greencommunitiesonline.org/tools/criteria/
- www.rurdev.usda.gov/MNHome.html

Minnesota Housing provides a variety of financing options for the development and preservation of affordable housing throughout the state. If organizations (developers, managers of affordable housing) receive a competitive award they must comply with mandatory *Enterprise Green Communities Criteria*, Minnesota overlay. Related to physical activity promotion, Minnesota Housing encourages the use of tools like WalkScore when analyzing site selection for affordable housing investments.

Affordable housing should be located within set distances from a designated number of facilities, which includes the following guidelines:

- **Urban/Small Cities:** a 0.25-mile walk distance of at least two or a 0.5-mile walk distance of at least four facilities
- **Suburban/Mid-Size Towns:** a 0.5-mile walk distance of at least three, or a 1-mile walk distance of at least six facilities
- **Rural/Tribal/Small Towns:** 2 miles of at least two facilities (*except for projects located on tribal lands or in communities of a population less than 10,000*)

Facilities include a variety of retail, services, and civic and community facilities. For more information visit the Green Communities website. Possible stakeholders interested in assuring

affordable housing is located near diverse facilities include Regional Development Commissions, Regional Housing Advisory Groups, and Minnesota Rural Development.

Minnesota GreenStep Cities

- www.mngreenstep.org

Minnesota GreenStep is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability goals through implementation of 28 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific actions from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage innovation.

GreenStep encourages cities to establish complete green streets and increase mobility options to support physical activity. Possible stakeholders interested in GreenStep City best practices include planning staff, environmental and sustainability committees, county health staff, etc.

Parks and Trails Legacy

- www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund

The Parks and Trails Legacy plan establishes a vision that provides world-class parks and trails connect everyone to the outdoors in Minnesota. Parks and trails create experiences that inspire a legacy of stewardship for the natural world and they provide regular physical activity opportunities that strengthen friendships, families, health, and spirit, now and into the future. Priority areas within four strategic directions have been established for parks and trails implementation, some of which relate directly to supporting active transportation. Strategic directions that support active transportation include:

- Physically connect communities with parks and trails and make them accessible to people of all abilities.
- Make high-priority trail connections and fill critical gaps.
- Focus on near-home, convenient opportunities in areas projected to grow most rapidly over the coming 25 years, near regional centers, and in areas of shortage.

Possible partners to assist with implementing strategic directions and priority areas related to active transportation in the parks and legacy plan include: parks and recreation departments, transportation planners, community planners, etc.

Indian Health Service – Healthy Weight for Life

- <http://www.ihs.gov/healthyweight/>
- http://www.ihs.gov/healthyweight/documents/HW4L_Communities.pdf

Society is made up of communities, organizations, families, and individuals—all working together for change. Healthful nutrition and physical activity legislation, statewide school

policies, media campaigns, promoting healthy weight as a cultural, societal norm, and partnerships with Tribes are just some of the ways a comprehensive strategy to promote healthy weight across the lifespan takes shape on a large scale. Communities include Tribes and Tribal organizations, schools, worksites, and community organizations. By making changes in policies and environments, these organizations can help individuals make better choices about healthful eating and physical activity. Changes to zoning ordinances, improvements to parks, trails, walkways, and recreation facilities to promote walking and physical activity, creating ways to grow, gather, and hunt food, or distributing free or inexpensive fresh fruits and vegetables to promote healthful eating—these are some of the many ways community groups can work together to promote healthy weight.

Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Examples

Several Minnesota communities have created action plans, policies, promotion materials, and more to plan and implement active transportation strategies. Minnesota Department of Health staff can provide more information – give specific examples and how to connect with communities doing similar work at email: health.SHIP@state.mn.us.

Appendix B: Education and Encouragement Resources

Share the Road Minnesota

- www.sharetheroadmn.org

Bicycle safety on Minnesota's streets and roads is a top priority for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the State Non-motorized Transportation Advisory Committee (SNTC). So MnDOT and the SNTC have joined together as partners to eliminate deaths and reduce injuries due to bicycle-motor vehicle collisions.

Share the Road Minnesota is an education campaign based on the recognition that bicyclists and motorists are equally responsible for bicycle safety. A variety of materials are available for download and upon request; including brochures, pocket cards, bookmarks, posters, public service announcements and videos. Materials can be distributed by partner and stakeholder groups. Possible partners to assist with disseminating the materials include: law enforcement, driver-motor vehicle services, libraries, schools, employers, etc.

Explore Minnesota

- www.exploreminnesota.com
- www.industry.exploreminnesota.com

Explore Minnesota provides guides promoting physical activity and boosting tourism/economic development in Minnesota. Submit physical activity opportunities (walking, bicycling, skiing, golfing, etc.) for residents and out-of-towners to engage in. Explore Minnesota provides a database of activities, provide biking guides, a highway map, which focuses on active living, and has the “More to Explore” campaign that highlights hiking, biking, etc.

The Industry Explore Minnesota information also offers grant opportunities to help communities promote their area of the state.

Possible partners to engage and collaborate with include local business owners, chambers of commerce, parks and recreation staff, economic development staff, and public works staff to promote active transportation and recreation facilities.

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota – Education

- <https://www.bikemn.org/education/>

The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota provides an education program to teach bicyclists of all ages to safely navigate streets and trails with vehicle traffic and pedestrians. BikeMN uses the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) Smart Cycling curriculum taught by volunteer League Cycling Instructors (LCI's).

Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition

- www.mncompletestreets.org

The Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition is a growing collaboration of individuals and groups across the state working to make streets and roads safe for all users. Find presentation examples, toolkits, state and local policies, and other resources on their website.

Appendix C: Engineering Resources

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

- <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>

The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) defines the standards used by road managers nationwide to install and maintain traffic control devices on all public streets, highways, bikeways, and private roads open to public traffic. The MUTCD is published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Minnesota Department of Transportation Bikeway Design Manual

- <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/design.html>
- <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/pdfs/manual/manualbw.pdf>

The purpose of the *Minnesota Bikeway Facility Design Manual* is to provide engineers, planners, and designers with a primary source to implement the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT's) vision and mission for bicycle transportation in Minnesota. This manual also provides citizens, developers, and others involved in the transportation planning process, guidance on the critical design and planning elements to promote bicycle safety, efficiency, and mobility.

Other Resources

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Guide for Bicycle Facilities
- Association for Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals Bicycle Parking Guidelines

Appendix D: Enforcement Resources

Minnesota Bicycle Laws

- https://www.bikemn.org/education/minnesota_bicycle_laws/
- <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=169.222>

The operation of bicycles in Minnesota is regulated by Minnesota Statutes (M.S.), generally in section 169.22. The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota summarizes highlights of the laws in their website.

Minnesota Pedestrian Laws

- <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=169.222>
- <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=169.21>

Minnesota pedestrian laws are regulated by Minnesota Statutes (M.S.), generally in section 169.21. The Minnesota Safety Council summarizes highlights of the laws on their website.

Appendix E: Talking Points

Regular physical activity supports health.

- Benefits of regular physical activity include:
 - Lower risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes
 - Decreased risk of falling and bone fractures
 - Helps manage discomfort of arthritis
 - Helps develop and maintain strong bones, muscles and joints
 - Improves mood and sense of well-being
 - Helps control weight
- Even small bouts—ten to fifteen minutes—of daily physical activity have health benefits. (*2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*)

Community design matters.

- Many Americans live where it's not easy to get the recommended amounts of physical activity every day.
 - In most communities, the most trivial errand requires the use of a car. (*Active Living Research, 2009*)
- The physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether or not members of the community walk or bike. (*Public Health Law and Policy*)
- Nearly ninety percent (87%) of all respondents agreed that how a community is built has a big effect on how much physical activity individuals get. (*Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Minnesota, 2010*)
- Minnesotans strongly support policies that enhance the built environment to encourage more physical activity.
 - Nearly all (93%) adult Minnesotans believe that future transportation projects should accommodate walkers and bicyclers as well as motorized vehicles.
 - The majority (72%) agree that there should be laws that require communities to build sidewalks and bike paths. (*Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Minnesota, 2010*)

Walking and biking have many community benefits.

- 41% of U.S. auto trips are less than 2 miles and 28% are less than 1 mile.
 - These represent a healthful, walkable distance for many people much of the year in Minnesota—yet most of these trips are taken by car. (*MN Green Steps Cities*)

- Replacing car trips with non-motorized trips results in cleaner air.
 - Avoiding just 10 miles of driving every week would eliminate about 500 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions a year. (*Bike Walk Twin Cities*)
- Increased foot traffic can boost property values and sales at local retail businesses.
 - There is evidence that property values increase in communities where residents area able to walk and bike easily. (*Public Health Law and Policy*)

Sources

- Department of Health and Human Services (2008). *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!* www.health.gov/paguidelines
- Active Living Research (2009). *Active Transportation: Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity.* http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Brief_ActiveTransportation.pdf
- Public Health Law and Policy. *Zoning for Healthy Places Talking Points.* Planning for Healthy Places. http://www.phlpnet.org/sites/phlpnet.org/files/PHLP_Zoning_0.pdf
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Minnesota Department of Health. *Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Minnesota: Addressing Root Causes of Obesity.* <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdrr/obesity/pdfdocs/ReportBCBSaddressrootcausesobesity.pdf>