Active Living in Communities Implementation Guide

STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP (SHIP)
Active Living in Communities Implementation Guide

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Updated: July 2019

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Contents

Definition of Strategy .................................................................................................................. 5
Goal ......................................................................................................................................... 5
Priority Populations ................................................................................................................ 5
Scope ....................................................................................................................................... 6
Foundational Practices ............................................................................................................ 7
Technical Assistance and Training .......................................................................................... 7
Comprehensive Strategy Requirements ................................................................................. 8
Recommended Partners ......................................................................................................... 8
Locations ................................................................................................................................. 8
Activity Definition: Master or Comprehensive Plans ................................................................. 9
Purpose ................................................................................................................................... 9
Technical Assistance and Training .......................................................................................... 9
Roles ........................................................................................................................................ 9
Technical Assistance Contractors ......................................................................................... 10
Implementation Steps ........................................................................................................... 10
Locations ............................................................................................................................... 11
Activity Definition: Land Use Zoning and Regulations .............................................................. 12
Purpose ................................................................................................................................. 12
Technical Assistance and Training ........................................................................................ 12
Roles ...................................................................................................................................... 12
Implementation Steps ........................................................................................................... 13
Locations ............................................................................................................................... 14
Activity Definition: Increased Access to Facilities and Opportunities for Walking & Bicycling 15
Purpose .................................................................................................................................. 15
Technical Assistance and Training ........................................................................................ 15
Roles .................................................................................................................................... 15
Implementation Steps .......................................................................................................... 16
Locations ............................................................................................................................... 16
Leveraging Events and Funds for PSE Changes ......................................................................... 17
Minimum Commitments for Optional Strategies ...................................................................... 18
Case Study: A Story from Bemidji ............................................................................................ 19
Definition of Strategy

Grantees working on the Active Living strategy engage in efforts to develop and implement policies and practices that create active communities by increasing opportunities for walking and bicycling. When choosing this strategy grantees should address active living through the six E approach: equity, evaluation, engineering, enforcement, education and encouragement. Specific activities for this comprehensive approach are described later in this document.

Active Living integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or bicycling for recreational, occupational or purposeful (transportation) reasons. Active Living provides safe, desirable and convenient opportunities for physical activity. Active Living policies and practices in community design, land use, site planning and walking/biking facility access are proven effective to increase levels of physical activity.

Goal

The objective of the Active Living strategy is to increase physical activity – primarily walking and bicycling – in the community and school settings. A comprehensive approach through policy, systems and environmental changes is known to increase access to physical activity opportunities and support behavior changes.

Certain populations are more likely to be negatively affected by the lack of physical activity. Efforts within this strategy should be focused on the groups listed in the following section, “Priority Populations.”

Priority Populations

Populations less likely to meet physical activity recommendations are at greater risk for other health conditions and experience greater health disparities. Nearly half of Minnesota adults do not meet physical activity recommendations. The prevalence of inactivity is greatest in rural areas, among people of color, older adults, persons with disabilities, women, those with lower education attainment and those in lower income groups. Therefore, it is important to recommend and prioritize improved active living in areas with a high concentration of populations, in both urban and rural areas.

Populations with Dementia

Physical activity plays a large role in prevention strategies for middle aged and older adults at a higher risk of dementia and improves health; research suggests it may contribute to the delay of cognitive decline in older adults. Evidence is growing; having an active lifestyle may sustain brain function later into life and delay cognitive decline – both age-related and caused by dementia. Maintaining adequate strength and balance to perform activities of daily living is also a purpose of active living. It is important to encourage movement, strengthening exercises, and walking as a part of daily routine to maintain health, socialization, and prevent cognitive
decline. Active living activities and utilizing the 6E approach equity, evaluation, engineering, education, encouragement and enforcement will:

- Feature pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented development for mixed-use within municipalities to support older Minnesotans ability to access social services, food stores, and health care.
- Work with cities to provide safe and convenient sidewalks and crosswalks in communities, which encourage older Minnesotans to be active and participate in social activities.
- Emphasize safer and more comfortable opportunities for older Minnesotans to walk, bike, and use transit allowing them to age in place within the community and live independently further into their advancing years.


Scope

The Active Living in Communities strategy is comprised of three activities: Master and Comprehensive Plans, Land Use Zoning and Increased Access to Facilities. Grantees should focus efforts on policy, systems and environmental changes through one or multiple of the activities described later in this guide.

Activities for the Active Living strategy should include working within all of the E’s, which are identified below with examples:

**Equity:** Nearly half of Minnesota adults do not meet physical activity recommendations. The prevalence of inactivity is greatest in rural areas, among people of color, older adults, persons with disabilities, women, those with lower education attainment and those in lower income groups. Focus efforts to support access to walking and biking for these populations.

**Evaluation:** Identify where health inequities exist, identify how to measure qualitative improvements in communities to support walking and bicycling.

**Engineering:** Identify infrastructure or facility improvements and provide resources on how they affect health improvement and support increased walking and bicycling.

**Enforcement:** Work with local law enforcement to identify problem pedestrian or bicycle areas and enforce existing laws to increase safety; ensure existing practices and systems are followed – for example, remote drop-off sites are used and followed.

**Education:** Decision-makers and partners have appropriate information and resources to understand how walking and bicycling affect their community and value its role in decision-making; general public has increased awareness of how policies and practices facilitate and inhibit their choice to walk and/or bicycle thereby affecting their health and quality of life.

**Encouragement:** Strategic events or opportunities to engage partners and general public around physical activity – examples include Open Streets, community-wide campaigns, supporting walk/bike events, etc.

While all items listed above are examples, grantees are required to identify activities in all of the six E’s to advance active living efforts.
Grantees should contact MDH staff to discuss work plans ideas if they are unsure about meeting the requirements of this strategy.

**Foundational Practices**

Start with these foundational practices steps before beginning to implement this strategy:

- Assess and identify health inequities and disparities to determine which priority populations and communities to work with.
- Engage affected communities.
- Communicate and build capacity of people affected and decision-makers.
- Prioritize needs and identify how to implement PSE changes by selecting activities.
- Sustain partnerships and efforts.

The general steps to implement these foundational practices include:

a) Assemble a team to conduct a community assessment.
b) Review existing data and collect additional data, as needed, related to population demographics and disease and risk factor data disparities and inequities.
c) Determine the existence and location of community stakeholders, organizations and resources.
d) Assess the opportunities and gaps.
e) Summarize and analyze the assessment data to select priority populations and communities to work with on this strategy.

The starting points for these foundational practices will vary, depending upon how much previous assessment work has been done in your communities through SHIP and/or other grants, programs and public health work. Some grantees may have already identified priority populations and communities with health inequities and others may be just beginning the process. Build on existing work wherever possible.

**Technical Assistance and Training**

Grantees selecting Active Living in Communities are required to contract for planning services from a Regional Development Commission, Metropolitan Planning Organization or planning consultant if selecting to work on Master and Comprehensive Plans or Land Use and Zoning Regulations. This contracted technical assistance should be secured for $5,000 – $50,000/year, depending on the scope of the work to be implemented. This requirement may be waived if grantees can demonstrate they have internal staff capacity to address planning services.

MDH and its partner organizations may offer technical assistance and training on this strategy from time to time. Opportunities will be posted on the Making it Better Log and on Basecamp. For specific technical assistance and training requests, contact the active living staff at MDH.
Comprehensive Strategy Requirements

A comprehensive approach to the Active Living strategy will address policy, systems and environmental changes known to increase access to physical activity opportunities and support behavior changes. Grantees working on the Active Living strategy engage in efforts to develop and implement policies and practices that create active communities by increasing opportunities for walking and bicycling. All phases of this work should address active living through the six E approach: equity, evaluation, education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering.

Recommended Partners

Recommended partners for this strategy include identifying existing efforts that align with proposed work and may include:

- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Regional and municipal planners and engineers
- Elected officials
- Chambers of Commerce and Visitor Bureaus
- AARP or the Area Agency on Aging
- Service organizations and local non-profits serving impacted populations
- Related advocacy groups

Locations

It is appropriate to implement this strategy across neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county levels.
Activity Definition: Master or Comprehensive Plans

Purpose
Grantees who select this activity will work toward developing and implementing master or comprehensive plans. Master plans may include bicycle and pedestrian plans, transportation plans, active living plans, Safe Routes to School plans and more. These plans establish policy statements, goals and standards for guiding the physical, social and economic development of a community. For health improvement work, plans can assist in providing a framework to increase access to safe walking and bicycling options within transportation and land use sections. Plans should be comprehensive in nature, addressing policies, projects and programs that support safer places to walk and bike. These plans are typically recommendations made to a municipal or county-body.

Technical Assistance and Training
Grantees are required to contract for planning services from a Regional Development Commission, Metropolitan Planning Organization or planning consultant if selecting to work on Master and Comprehensive Plans. See the “Roles” section below for more information on technical assistance contractors.

MDH staff is available to help grantees determine the proper amount to budget for contracting a planning partner for this activity.

MDH and its partner organizations may offer technical assistance and training on this activity from time to time. Opportunities will be posted on the Making it Better Log and on Basecamp. For specific technical assistance and training requests, contact the active living staff at MDH.

Roles
Grantees
Depending on the community, grantees may facilitate or help facilitate a planning and engagement process for the plan. Examples of engagement can be listening sessions, bikeable or walkable community workshops and community gatherings. Grantees can help convene appropriate partners, and offer support for efforts to increase safe access to walking and bicycling. When plan priorities and recommendations are identified, grantees can support implementation.
MDH

MDH staff can assist in further defining what comprehensive means in the context of the active living strategy and provide examples of what other communities have accomplished. MDH staff can also provide trainings for walkable and bikeable communities. These workshops can help in setting a vision for what a community desires, and establish a framework for a plan.

Technical Assistance Contractors

Planning contractors can draft planning documents based on community input, among other things. Here are some of the key things your planning partner can do:

- Plan implementation assistance
- Mapping
- Meeting facilitation
- Advising/creating the community action plan
- Goal prioritization
- Walkability workshops
- Assessment of policies, plans and programs

Grantees should also consider contracting or providing stipends to organizations that serve impacted populations. In the case of walking and biking, people that have greater challenges include youth, other adults, people with disabilities, people of color, low income urban populations, and small rural communities. Consideration for engagement stipends could be given to organizations that serve disparate populations.

Implementation Steps

Grantees should convene diverse partner groups to establish a vision and goals. Goals can help guide the process of how work will be accomplished. They should work with communities to identify gaps within the current walking and bicycling system, identify priorities, and build support for plans and policies that will address safer places to walk and bike. All identified efforts should be tied back to development and/or implementation of a plan or policy change.

Grantees working on this activity are required to contract with a local planning partner. The planning partner will be very useful in outlining and possibly carrying out the implementation process for this activity.

Your contracted planning partner can be critical in the implementation of this strategy in regard to assessing current plans and policies related to active living, how to navigate the political system and what local data and resources are available. Also, they are likely to know the responsible entity for the transportation facilities in your community and can give guidance on how to engage them.
Relationships with planners from MnDOT, county, city and other agencies can also be invaluable partners. Look to engage these partners in ways that are mutually beneficial so that they begin to see you as a resource.

**Locations**

Activity may occur at the neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county level.
Activity Definition: Land Use Zoning and Regulations

Purpose
Grantees who select this activity will work toward developing and implementing land use zoning and regulations. Zoning often regulates environmental design elements such as aesthetic and safety aspects of the physical environment, street continuity and connectivity, mixed-use development, residential density, and the proximity of residential areas to stores, jobs, schools and recreation areas. This activity can further address mixed-use development and improvements to streetscape design, which can result in creating access to safer places to walk and bike. Land use can be regulated by zoning, building codes, government policies or building practices that change the physical environment of municipal areas.

Technical Assistance and Training
Grantees are required to contract for planning services from a Regional Development Commission, Metropolitan Planning Organization or planning consultant if selecting to work on Land Use and Zoning Regulations. See the “Roles” section below for more information on technical assistance contractors.

MDH staff is available to help grantees determine the proper amount to budget for contracting a planning partner for this activity.

MDH and its partner organizations may offer technical assistance and training on this activity from time to time. Opportunities will be posted on the Making it Better Log and on Basecamp. For specific technical assistance and training requests, contact the Active Living staff at MDH.

Roles
Grantee
Depending on the community, grantees may facilitate or help facilitate a planning and engagement process for the land use zoning and regulations supportive of walking and bicycling. Examples of engagement can be listening sessions, bikeable or walkable community workshops and community gatherings. Grantees can help convene appropriate partners, and offer support for efforts to increase safe access to walking and bicycling. When plan priorities and recommendations are identified, grantees can support implementation of land use zoning and regulation changes.
MDH

MDH staff can assist in defining what comprehensive means in the context of this activity and provide examples of what other communities have accomplished. MDH staff can also provide knowledge of best practices for this activity based on national and regional knowledge and research.

Technical Assistance Contractors

Planning contractors can draft land use and zoning documents based on community input, among other things. Here are some of the key things your planning partner can do:

- Plan implementation assistance
- Mapping
- Meeting facilitation
- Advising/creating the community action plan
- Goal prioritization
- Walkability workshops
- Assessment of policies, plans and programs

Grantees should also consider contracting or providing stipends to organizations that serve impacted populations. In the case of walking and biking, people that have greater challenges include youth, older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, low income urban populations and small rural communities. Consideration for engagement stipends could be given to organizations that serve disparate populations.

Implementation Steps

Grantees should convene diverse partner groups to establish a vision and goals. Goals can help guide the process of how work will be accomplished. They should work with communities to identify gaps within the current walking and bicycling system, identify priorities, and build support for plans and policies that will address safer places to walk and bike. All identified efforts should be tied back to development and/or implementation of a plan or policy change.

Grantees working on this activity should contract with a local planning partner. The planning partner will be useful in outlining the implementation process for this activity.

Your contracted planning partner will be invaluable in the implementation of this strategy in regard to assessing current plans and policies related to active living, how to navigate the political system and what local data and resources are available. Also, they are likely to know the responsible entity for the transportation facilities in your community and can give guidance on how to engage them.

Relationships with planners from MnDOT, county, city and other agencies can also be invaluable partners. Look to engage these partners in ways that are mutually beneficial so that they begin to see you as a resource.
Locations

Activity may occur at the neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county level.
Activity Definition: Increased Access to Facilities and Opportunities for Walking & Bicycling

Purpose
Grantees who select this activity will need to clearly identify a priority population experiencing health inequities. A work plan identifying and assessing the problem, along with specific tactics for the foundational practices outlined above will be essential to advancing this activity. Enhancing access to places for physical activity involves changes to local environments, such as creating walking trails, and providing access to existing nearby facilities and destinations such as parks or grocery stores. Increased access is typically achieved in a particular community through a multi-component strategy that includes training or education for participants.

Technical Assistance and Training
Grantees should consider contracting or providing stipends to organizations that serve impacted populations for walking & bicycling. In the case of active living, people that have greater challenges include youth, other adults, people with disabilities, people of color, low income urban populations, and small rural communities. Consideration for that serve disparate populations. For example, they may conduct a focus group with a group of senior citizens to inform an active living plan in return for this stipend.

MDH and its partner organizations may offer technical assistance and training on this activity from time to time. Opportunities will be posted on the Making it Better Log and on Basecamp. For specific technical assistance and training requests, contact the active living staff at MDH.

Roles
Grantee
Depending on the community, grantees may facilitate or help facilitate a planning and engagement process with identified priority populations for the increased access to facilities supportive of active living. Examples of engagement can be listening sessions, community workshops and community gatherings. Grantees can help convene appropriate partners and offer support for efforts to increase safe access to active living opportunities. When priorities and recommendations are identified, grantees can support implementation of increased access to facilities recommendations.
MDH

MDH staff can assist in defining what increased access to facilities means and provide examples of what other communities have accomplished. Visioning workshops can help in setting a vision for what a community desires and establish a framework for a plan that increases access to community facilities.

Technical Assistance Contractors

Although it is not required to contract with a planning partner when choosing this activity, it may still be useful. Planning contractors can draft planning documents based on community input. Grantees should also consider contracting or providing stipends to organizations that serve impacted populations. Consideration for stipends could be given to organizations that serve disparate populations to conduct engagement in a variety of ways.

Implementation Steps

Grantees working on this activity are not required to contract with a local planning partner but it may be helpful. The planning partner might be useful in assisting with the implementation process for this activity.

Grantees should work with communities to identify gaps in access to active living opportunities. This might be done in the form of a community survey, an open house or a variety of other ways. Grantees should also identify what populations are experiencing inequities and collaborate with those impacted populations to identify priorities. It may be helpful to partner with an organization that is already working with a specific priority population so that you can leverage resources and effectively reach those communities. It is important to build support for increased access to active living opportunities through community-wide education and encouragement. This may be done through a specific community assessment like Walk Friendly Community or Bicycle Friendly Community award applications or workshops. This may be done in the form of a community event, such as an Open Streets event; however, it is critical to link these engagement and education efforts back to how people will access facilities through safer places to walk and bike. Ultimately, the use of community events should contribute to the overall goal of increasing access to facilities. All identified efforts should be tied back to development and/or implementation of a plan or policy change related to walking or bicycling.

Locations

Activity may occur at the neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county level.
Leveraging Events and Funds for PSE Changes

All SHIP work needs to be tied to PSE changes. That said, grantees may leverage funding, such as mini-grants, or use events, such as open streets, to help implement broader PSE changes.

For example, imagine a street is going to be reconstructed and has been identified as a good location for bicycle improvements. A grantee might use an open streets event to build support for bicycle improvements on that street. Grantees also have the opportunity to apply for mini-grants to support PSE changes. Mini-grants can be used to leverage resources from partners as long as they contribute to greater PSE goals.

Although grantees cannot use SHIP funds to pay for infrastructure improvements there are many ways to support partners in implementing active living projects. For example, to leverage funding to build a facility (i.e. sidewalk, trail) grantees may contribute funds towards signage.

Grantees may support changes to the built environment by funding other actions or recommendations that have been identified in a master or comprehensive plan. Refer to the Financial Implementation Guide for allowable use of funds.
Minimum Commitments for Optional Strategies

If a grantee does not pursue active living as a strategy, they are still required, at a minimum, to participate in the development and roll out of the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan Minnesota Walks.

Participation may include:

- Collecting pedestrian and bicycle count data
Case Study: A Story from Bemidji

Bemidji is located in Northern Minnesota and is home to about 14,000 people. Situated near the headwaters of the Mississippi River, Bemidji is considered the “First City on the Mississippi.” In 2009, the city was one of eight communities in the state to receive funding for active transportation projects as part of the Active Living Minnesota program from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. Several organizations teamed up to form Active Living Bemidji, a partnership to promote the integration of active transportation into daily life. Active Living Bemidji, North Country Health Board and Bemidji Safe Routes to School created plans in 2009-2010 to implement projects in active transportation. The City of Bemidji also adopted an active transportation policy in 2011. Bemidji has been a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community since 2012. Bikers here can enjoy the Mississippi River Trail and the Paul Bunyan Trail, and they can rent a bike through the Nice Ride program that began in June 2014.

Changes in Policy, Systems and Environment

One of the first steps to creating change in Bemidji was the development of the Active Living Bemidji Plan. The plan set goals and prioritized action steps based on discussion with the public and determined which organizations in the partnership were responsible for which action steps. In 2010 the North Country Health Board developed an Active Living Plan and the Joint Planning Board for the City of Bemidji, Bemidji Township and Northern Township updated their transportation plan to include a stronger focus on the active transportation component. In 2011, the City of Bemidji adopted an active transportation policy. The culmination of these plans and the changes that were implemented helped Bemidji to receive the designation of a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community in 2012. The start of the Nice Ride in June of 2014 marked the first partnership of an urban bike share program with a smaller city four hours away from Nice Ride’s headquarters in the Twin Cities, and created a system where Bemidji residents, students and visitors can rent bikes.

Education Efforts in Bemidji

Educational programs in Bemidji offer residents different options based on their comfort level. Cycling education classes in Bemidji are tailored to the needs of the community and offer great variety, making these educational opportunities visible in different social circles and settings. Group bicycle rides encourage broad involvement by offering a shorter, slower bike ride on many of their outings. Educating residents about the nearby trail system gives people places to walk and bike without interacting directly with traffic. Bemidji is also a Regional Education Center, consisting of a group of League Cycling Instructors and others interested in promoting bicycling. The group meets quarterly to assess bike education needs and to plan classes and events.

A Regional Education Center is composed of a group of League Cycling Instructors (LCI) and others who are interested in promoting biking, such as the sustainability coordinator or a member of the city council. Bemidji is one of eight RECs in Northern Minnesota, with seven LCIs and other interested people who meet regularly to plan events and trainings. Many
professions are represented within the group; members include a doctor, transportation planner, sustainability coordinator, member of the city council, BSU Physical Education Chair and more. They offer a variety of classes such as the Traffic Skills 101 course, Bike Rodeos, Basics course, Women’s course and Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day.

Shifting Gears is a bike maintenance program founded by Diane Pittman in the early 2000s. The organization acted as a catalyst for many of the efforts to promote active living through bicycle education in Bemidji. This local non-profit provides bike maintenance skills and bicycles to the underserved population of Bemidji. In many cases, these bicycles become the recipient’s primary mode of transportation.

**Using Community Events to Promote Bicycling**

There are several bicycling encouragement events throughout the year in Bemidji. Since 2010, the community embraces its cold winter weather by holding the Brrrrmidji ride on New Year’s Day. Participants can choose how many miles to ride, though one tradition is to ride the total number of miles equal to the day’s temperature. Bicyclists also participate in the Day after Thanksgiving parade, a celebration when the city’s holiday lights are turned on for the first time. This helps advertise bicycling to a diverse audience at a highly visible event. One of the newer events hosted in Bemidji is the Loop the Lake Festival on Lake Bemidji, which was held for the first time in June 2014. More than 350 people attended the festival, far exceeding initial expectations. Some of the events included a ride around the lake and bike mechanic stations staffed by volunteers from the local bike shop. This festival showcased the broad community support for bicycling with several local sponsors, including two organizations that finalized their sponsorship the day before the event. The city also used the Loop the Lake Festival strategically to kick off the beginning of Nice Ride Bemidji.

**Best Practices for Communities:**

**Shared responsibilities**

Bemidji has several different ongoing initiatives in bicycling and walking. Different organizations will take the lead on different initiatives, and within the organizations different people will take the lead. This sharing of responsibilities ensures that no organization takes on more than it can handle. It also allows organizations to be sustainable in providing consistent support on these initiatives and helps ensure that any momentum created by a program or an event doesn’t fizzle out, so that community members can expect the successful programs and events to be offered regularly.

**High visibility**

Many bicycling programs in the Bemidji area are promoted to the entire community. The participation of bicyclists in the Day after Thanksgiving parade and the Bemidji ride on New Year’s Day is a good way to keep bicycling on everyone’s mind in colder months. The cycling education classes in Bemidji are tailored to the needs of the community and have great variety, allowing these educational opportunities to become visible in different social circles and
settings. Nice Ride also provides bikes in prominent locations around Bemidji and shows visitors the community’s commitment to providing an enjoyable and practical experience for bicyclists.

**Offer a variety of activities**

The programs in Bemidji offer residents different options based on their comfort level. The variety of bicycling education courses is a good example of meeting residents where they are at and helping them understand bicycling can be enjoyable for many people. The group bicycle rides encourage this by offering a shorter, slower bike ride on many of their outings. The nearby trail system gives people places to walk and bike without interacting directly with traffic.

**Redirecting community energy to PSE**

Use community desire for varying bicycle or pedestrian amenities like signage, benches, or bike fleets to leverage the opportunity for the development of an Active Living or Bicycle/Pedestrian plan for sustainability and greater population health impact. The desired infrastructure like signs, benches or bike fleets can be the incentive to conduct community engagement and complete a thorough community wide plan. MDH content staff can offer assistance to redirect community energy to larger PSE strategies.
Appendix A: Planning Resources

Steps to a Walkable Community: A Guide for Citizens, Planners and Engineers

- AmericaWalks (http://americawalks.org)

*Steps to a Walkable Community* provides strategies to move you toward a more walkable community. The guide works to capture both time-tested and new innovative tactics that are realistic and achievable. AmericaWalks aims for this resource to be a first stop for walking projects, campaigns and initiatives.

Walkability Checklist

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/resources/resources_details.cfm?id=5085)

How walkable is your community? The Walkability Checklist can help you find the answer. Inside you'll find insightful questions, allowing you to evaluate your neighborhood's walkability. In addition to the questions, the checklist provides both immediate answers and long-term solutions to your neighborhood's potential problems. Pick a place to walk, like the route to school or a friend's house. As you walk, use the checklist to describe problem areas and things to change. After the walk, answer all of the questions and you'll see how your route rates on the walkability scale. Take heart if you find problems; there are many ways you can make things better. Completed by: community officials, planning staff or neighborhood residents

Walk Friendly Communities

- Walk Friendly Communities (http://walkfriendly.org/)

Walk Friendly Communities (WFC) is a national recognition program developed to encourage towns and cities across the U.S. to establish or recommit to a high priority for supporting safer walking environments. The WFC program will recognize communities that are working to improve a wide range of conditions related to walking, including safety, mobility, access and comfort. Communities can complete the tool to establish a baseline and identify strengths and opportunities for assessing walkability. Completed by: community officials, planning staff or neighborhood residents.

Minnesota Walks: Statewide Pedestrian Plan

- Department of Transportation: Minnesota Walks (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/minnesota-walks.html)

Minnesota Walks, the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan, is a collaborative effort between MnDOT and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) designed to be a shared roadmap for
how all Minnesotans can have safe, desirable and convenient places to walk and roll where they live, work, learn and play.

Developed through a community engagement process and guidance from a project advisory committee, Minnesota Walks will guide planning, decision-making and collaboration for agencies, organizations, policy-makers, and public and private entities across the state. Gain a better understanding of pedestrian needs and challenges in Minnesota from public and external stakeholders to help MnDOT and MDH better address pedestrian needs.

How to Increase Bicycling for Daily Travel

- Active Living Research: How to Increase Bicycling for Daily Travel (http://www.activelivingresearch.org/dailybiketravel)
- Active Living Research (http://www.activelivingresearch.org)

What are the most effective strategies cities can use to increase bicycling? A growing number of studies have assessed the effectiveness of many strategies for increasing levels of bicycling, including on-street bike lanes, off-street bike paths, and other bicycling infrastructure; promotional and educational programs, such as bike-to-work days and bicycle training classes; and policies, including parking restrictions and traffic-calmed neighborhoods. This brief summarizes the available evidence about strategies for increasing bicycling levels and encouraging bicycling as a mode of transportation. It also presents related policy implications.

Bicycle Friendly Communities

- The League of American Bicyclists: Bicycle Friendly Communities (https://www.bikeleague.org/community)

The Bicycle Friendly Community Program provides incentives, hands-on assistance and award recognition for communities that actively support bicycling. A Bicycle Friendly Community welcomes bicyclists by providing safe accommodation for biking and encouraging people to bike for transportation and recreation. View an overview presentation of the program. Completed by: community officials, planning staff or neighborhood residents.

Safe Routes to School

- Minnesota Safe Routes to School (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/)
- Minnesota Department of Health: Safe Routes to School (https://www.health.state.mn.us/srts)

The MN Safe Routes to School Online Resource Center and MDH Safe Routes to School pages offer resources and information. Communities getting started should use the SRTS Evaluation Tools to evaluate and summarize the current conditions that impact students’ ability to walk and bicycle to school safely.
Minnesota Department of Health: Healthy Places

- [Minnesota Department of Health: Healthy Places](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/places/index.html)

The design of the places where we live, work and play affects our health by determining our access to healthy foods and health care services, our ability to be physically active, and the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Minnesota Department of Health: Comprehensive Plans

- [Minnesota Department of Health: Comprehensive Plans](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/places/plans.html)

Comprehensive (comp) plans are one of the primary tools used by local governments to achieve the community vision, regulate land uses and guide future investments. This page provides links to resources, reports and guides.

Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide


The Minnesota Food Charter Food Access Planning Guide provides tools, resources, proven policy strategies, and recommended planning and zoning language for comprehensive plans, so planners and community food advocates can collaborate to design communities that promote access to healthy, safe, affordable food.

Communities for a Lifetime

- [Communities for a Lifetime](http://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 can be 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 and chambers of commerce.
Minnesota Department of Transportation

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Pedestrians (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Bicycling (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Bicycle and pedestrian traffic counts (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/bicycle-pedestrian-traffic-counts.html)

Find bicycle and pedestrian transportation resources from MnDOT. Resources include methodology for counting bicyclists and pedestrians, which can be used for project evaluation.

Minnesota Housing – Green Communities


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 the 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. Possible stakeholders for these efforts include Regional Development Commissions, Regional Housing Advisory Groups and Minnesota Rural Development.

Minnesota GreenStep Cities

- Minnesota GreenStep (https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/)

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**

- [Minnesota Legacy: Parks and Trails Fund](http://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 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 with a shortage of parks and trails.

Possible partners include: parks and recreation departments, transportation planners and community planners.

**Indian Health Service – Healthy Weight for Life**

[Indian Health Service: Healthy Weight for Life](http://www.ihs.gov/healthyweight/)

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, 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.
Small Town and Rural Design Guide: Facilities for Walking and Bicycling

Small Town and Rural Design Guide (http://ruraldesignguide.com/)

The Small Town and Rural Design Guide is an online design resource and idea book, intended to help small towns and rural communities support safe, comfortable, and active travel for people of all ages and abilities.
Appendix B: Active Living Plan

Sample Outline for Active Living Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Active Living?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purpose of the Plan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Document Content</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regional Assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Active Living Context</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Bike Friendly Community Assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o SWOT Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Key Findings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• County A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Active Living Context</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Key Findings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• County B</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Active Living Context</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Key Findings</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Living Plan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Active Living Vision</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goals</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objectives and Strategies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Approach</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Early Implementation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One to Five Year Implementation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Model Table of Contents for Active Living Plan

Note – This page is purely a suggested format for a plan. You have the discretion to be creative and change the content or modify the sections to meet the needs of your organization and region.

Acknowledgements

In the acknowledgments Section, highlight, note or thank anyone involved in the development of the plan. This is generally one page.

Introduction

The introduction can provide context for the project and lays out what active living is all about in your region. Subsections can include a description of the approach to creating the plan, the purpose of this effort, the content of the plan and how to use the plan.

Community Assessment

All of the work that you have done since the start of the grant is great material for the assessment.

- If you had an active living meeting, what did you learn in that meeting?
- If you did research about best practices, which ones make sense for your region? Why?
- If you talked to a mayor who appears to be interested in zoning, how can you use zoning and land use tools to improve active transportation?
- Do you have plans for your state trails; are there priorities articulated in existing trails plans?
- If you asked your active living partners what their top five priorities are over the next year, what are they?
- Write all of that down.

The assessment should give a clear picture of the existing situation for active living, as well as opportunities and challenges moving forward. A good assessment has clear connections to the goals and strategies proposed in the plan. It also has the support and buy-in of key players in your region that might have to play a role in implementation. For example, let’s say you have passed complete streets policies; note that in your assessment. A strategy in the plan section (below) could be to pass more policies and/or implement the existing policies/plans. Which communities are ready and willing? Who can be a champion to help you implement the strategies in subsequent years? Write all of that down.

Active Living Plan

The Active Living Plan should articulate a vision of active living, and lay out goals, objectives and strategies. Development of the plan should involve partners, such as cities, counties and state
agencies. Finally, the plan should be based upon policy, systems and environmental (PSE) approach, with a healthy amount of education and encouragement appropriately tied to PSE.

Implementation Approach

The implementation approach is where you describe how implementation will take place. Who are your key partners? Who are the champions? Do you have specific ideas for each county? How will you prioritize strategies? How will you utilize partners? What role should people play?

Attributes of Strategic Planning for Active Living Plan

Basics

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- How will we get there?

Where are we now?

- Assess the situation – Develop a clear understanding of the exiting situation, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis)
- Issue oriented
- Focus on the main issues – not necessarily comprehensive

*In this context, this could mean that the assessment can be targeted to active transportation (just biking and walking), as opposed to considering every possible issue related to physical activity and active living in your region*

Where are we going?

- Sustainable competitive advantage
  - What is your region’s competitive advantage?
  - What can you be best at?
  - What makes your region unique?
- Vision
  - What will your region look like in 20 years?
  - Are you inspired by that vision?
How will we get there?

- Plan Development – Short term in nature
  - Three to five years – as opposed to 20 to 30
  - Goals, objectives and strategies

- Effective response – solutions that work
  - Don’t overlook a good strategy in search of an optimal strategy

- Prioritization is key
  - It is important to get traction on the issues that are most pressing
  - What is the opportunity cost of pursuing one initiative over another?
  - What is going to be most cost effective and produce a large impact?

How to Create a Vision and Strategic Priorities in Roughly Two Meetings for Active Living Plan

Group Activity #1

Discussion question(s)

What does active living mean to you? What does it mean to your communities?

- Notes to the facilitator
  - Pose the question to the group and give them a few minutes to think quietly
  - Give everyone a chance to verbally give a response and record everything on a flip chart that everyone can see
  - If a majority of answers are focused heavily on activities, such as playing basketball, or square-dancing, ask a probing question to get them thinking of the built environment. For example: When you think of active living as it relates to the built environment, how does the definition change (if at all)?

Example answers from the active living kickoff

- Reframe the conversation about transportation with planners, engineers and public health professionals
- Combat obesity by creating physical environments that allow routine physical activity
- Strong active living culture (seeing lots of people out bicycling, walking, etc.)
- Make non-motorized transportation a convenient option in urban/regional centers
- Make transportation less car-centric, focus more on people
- Active and vocal trail groups, bicycle clubs, parent groups, etc. advocating for active living
Group Activity #2 – Active Community 2035 Exercise

Scenario

The year is 2035 and the World Health Organization is coming to your community to award “Excellence in Active Living Award” for the great work that you have done in building healthy communities that have inspired and enabled all residents and visitors to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. They are accompanied by a reporter from CNN and will run a lengthy story in a special series targeting health.

▪ What do you show them?

▪ What specifically has changed over the past 20 years? (What has happened and what was the impact?)

▪ Notes to the facilitator

▪ Use the same format as above and ask everyone what they think. Record the ideas so everyone can see.

▪ After the meeting, or during a break, synthesize the information and pull out three to five themes. Write up the themes in a vision statement that clearly articulates a prosperous and active future.

Strategic Priorities Exercise for Active Living Plan

Scenario

Pretend that you are in charge of all Active Living Initiatives in [Community] for a day and it is your sole responsibility to build a state where physical activity is pervasive in all facets of community life because bicycling, walking and transit options are so safe, convenient and enjoyable that driving a motor vehicle seems like an irresponsible and expensive burden. You only get paid if you are successful.

▪ What is the first thing you do?

▪ What do you work on?

▪ *Note to the facilitator

▪ Follow Nominal Group Process Technique Brief by CDC: Gaining Consensus Among Stakeholders Through the Nominal Group Technique (PDF) (http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief7.pdf)

▪ *Hint – answers should include specific policy, systems and environmental change strategies related to active living.

▪ This exercise should follow the vision exercise and the summarized statement should be visible – this will allow participants to generate strategies that will help moving their community or region toward the vision.
Example vision from the Headwaters

Through deliberate, collective action, the Headwaters Region will be a place:

- Where there exists a mutual respect among all modes of transportation
- That has been recognized nationally as a safe and healthy place to live
- That is as accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians as it is for motor vehicles
- Where physical activity is safe, easy and accessible, and is a common occurrence for residents
- That has strong connections – allowing people to comfortably navigate to and from destinations in the community
- Where children can safely walk and bicycle to school
Appendix C: Education and Encouragement Resources

Explore Minnesota

- Explore Minnesota (http://www.exploreminnesota.com/index.aspx)

Explore Minnesota provides guides promoting physical activity and boosting tourism/economic development in Minnesota. The website encourages submissions of physical activity opportunities (walking, bicycling, skiing, golfing). Explore Minnesota provides a database of activities, bicycling guides, a highway map and other resources that focus on active living, and has the “More to Explore” campaign that highlights hiking and bicycling opportunities. The Industry Explore Minnesota website features information on grant opportunities for communities interested in promoting their area of the state.

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota – Education and Technical Assistance

- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (http://www.bikemn.org)

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 Smart Cycling curriculum taught by volunteer League Cycling Instructors. BikeMN offers Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum training for teachers and people looking to implement k – 8 walking and bicycling curriculum with schools and youth-based organizations. The Bicycle Alliance also offers technical assistance for communities interested in pursuing Bicycle Friendly community status.

Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition

- Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition (http://www.mncompletestreets.org/)

The Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition is working to make streets and roads safe for all users. Find presentation examples, toolkits, state and local policies, and other resources on their website.

Open Streets Project

- Open Streets Project (http://openstreetsproject.org/)

Open Streets initiatives temporarily close streets to automobile traffic, so people may use them for walking, bicycling, dancing, playing and socializing. The Open Streets Project includes a published guide and an interactive website, which allows advocates and organizers to explore
Open Streets efforts in other cities. The website includes best practices, maps, videos and publicity materials on the individual initiative blog feature.
Appendix D: Engineering Resources

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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.

Minnesota Department of Transportation Bikeway Design Manual

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Bicycling in Minnesota (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/)  
- Minnesota Department of Transportation Bikeway Design Manual (PDF) (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/documents/design-engineering/manual.pdf)

The Minnesota Bikeway Facility Design Manual provides engineers, planners and designers with a primary source to implement MnDOT’s vision and mission for bicycle transportation in Minnesota. This manual also gives 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.

Small Town and Rural Design Guide

Small Town and Rural Design Guide (http://ruraldesignguide.com/)

An online design resource and idea book, intended to help small towns and rural communities support safe, comfortable, and active travel for people of all ages and abilities.

Minnesota Best Practices for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety


The practices in this guide provide an overview of the current general state of the practice in Minnesota relating to the design and operation of pedestrian- and bicycle-related facilities.
Essentials of Bike Parking


This guide helps prepare communities planning to purchase or install bike parking fixtures on a limited scale. It is a brief overview of APBP’s comprehensive Bicycle Parking Guidelines handbook, available at www.apbp.org.

National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 803: Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Along Existing Roads—ActiveTrans Priority Tool Guidebook


The guidebook presents a tool and guidance that can be used to help prioritize improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities, either separately or together as part of a “Complete Streets” evaluation approach. The guidebook is supplemented by a CD that contains a programmed spreadsheet to facilitate implementation of the ActiveTrans methodology, as well as a final report that documents the research approach, findings and conclusions.

Other Resources

- The National Center for Bicycle and Walking Centerlines newsletter (http://bikewalk.org/newsletter.php)
- Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (https://www.apbp.org/)
Appendix E: Enforcement Resources

Minnesota Bicycle Laws

▪ Minnesota Department of Transportation: Bicycling in Minnesota (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/index.html)

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 on their website.

Minnesota Pedestrian Laws

▪ 2018 Minnesota Statutes: Pedestrian (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 F: Active Living 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—10 to 15 minutes—of daily physical activity have health benefits (2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans [https://health.gov/paguidelines/]).

Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity

The following statements were taken from a paper released by Active Living Research titled Active Transportation: Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity (https://activelivingresearch.org/active-transportation-making-link-transportation-physical-activity-and-obesity).

- Many Americans live in communities that lack sidewalks, trails, bicycle paths and other infrastructure that support walking and bicycling.
- Investments that support physical activity, like greenways, trails, sidewalks, traffic-calming devices and public transit, can create recreational opportunities, improve people’s health and lower health care costs.
- Walking or biking to school can help kids be more active overall.
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit promote physical activity.
- Multi-use trails can promote walking and bicycling, especially among women and people living in lower-income areas.
- Federal, state and local policies and funding that support infrastructure investments can help promote physical activity among people of all ages. Safe Routes to School programs and the management of traffic in local neighborhoods and around schools can increase physical activity among children, adolescents and adults.

Community design matters

- The physical environment (the neighborhood) has a strong effect on whether or not members of the community walk or bike.
- Walking and cycling can be increased by community-scale urban design and land use policies. (Moving Toward Active Transportation, 2016 (PDF) (https://www.activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Review_ActiveTransport_January2016.pdf))
Minnesotans strongly support policies that enhance the built environment to encourage more physical activity.

Nearly all (93 percent) adult Minnesotans believe that future transportation projects should accommodate walkers and bicyclers as well as motorized vehicles (Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Minnesota, 2014 (PDF) [http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@mwa/documents/downloadable/ucm_469946.pdf]).

Walking and bicycling have many community benefits

- 41 percent of U.S. auto trips are less than 2 miles and 28 percent 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](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/))
- Replacing car trips with non-motorized trips results in cleaner air.
- Currently bikes and e-bikes make up 6% of miles traveled in world cities. If by 2050, bikes and e-bikes make up 14% of travel in world cities, there would be an overall 11% reduction in carbon emissions ([Our Streets MPLS](https://www.ourstreetsmpls.org/does_bike_commuting_affect_your_carbon_footprint_and_how_much))
- Walking is essential for transportation ([Minnesota Walks 2015](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/)).
- Everyone is a pedestrian at some point in their day. Even if you drive to a destination you are a pedestrian the moment you step out of your car
- Walking is good for business ([Minnesota Walks 2015](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/)).
- Commercial businesses with mixed-use, medium-high density benefit from pedestrian infrastructure.
- Walkable communities attract investment from both commercial and residential developers.
- Walking is good for health ([Minnesota Walks 2015](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/)).
- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many chronic diseases and has been linked to improved mental well-being and improved quality of life.
- Improving pedestrian infrastructure supports an increase in walking.
- Walking connects the social, economic and physical environment ([Minnesota Walks 2015](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/)).
- Pedestrian infrastructure connects people to major destinations – schools, jobs, recreation and parks, goods and services.

One study of 35 large U.S. cities found that each additional mile of bike lane per square mile was associated with about a 1 percent increase in the share of workers commuting by bicycle ([Active Living Research 2013](https://activelivingresearch.org/)).

Countries and cities with high levels of bicycling have extensive infrastructure, as well as pro-bicycle policies and programs, whereas those with low levels of bicycling have done much less ([Active Living Research 2013](https://activelivingresearch.org/)).
Physical Activity: Built Environment Approaches Combining Transportation System Interventions with Land Use and Environmental Design

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (https://www.thecommunityguide.org/task-force/community-preventive-services-task-force-members) recommends strategies that combine one or more interventions to improve pedestrian or bicycle transportation systems with one or more land use and environmental design interventions to increase physical activity.

Assessing the Economic Impact and Health Effects of Bicycling in Minnesota

- Assessing the Economic Impact and Health Effect of Bicycling in Minnesota (PDF) (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/research/TS/2016/201636.pdf)

In 2012, MnDOT identified bicycling as an integral part of Minnesota’s transportation system in its 20-year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan. However, research on bicycling in Minnesota has been selective and does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic impact and health effects of bicycling (Transportation Research Synthesis #1309). Therefore, a concerted effort is needed to quantify the economic impact of and to assess the health effects of bicycling in Minnesota. To address the need, this project has four goals:

- Estimate the economic impact of bicycling industry in Minnesota, by interviewing key industry informants and surveying manufacturers, parts suppliers, distributors, and retail establishments.
- Systematically review studies that estimated bicycling infrastructure use in various parts of Minnesota to provide a comprehensive estimate for the magnitude of bicycling infrastructure usage in the state.
- Estimate the economic impact of bicycling events in Minnesota, by profiling attendees of selected bicycling events in Minnesota.
- Assess the health benefits of bicycling, by performing secondary analysis of existing data and estimating the economic value of the health benefits associated with bicycle commuting.