

Active Transportation

Active transportation integrates physical activity into daily routines such as walking or biking to destinations such as work, grocery stores or parks. Active transportation policies and practices in community design, land use and facility access have been proven effective to increase physical activity.

Built environment and physical activity

The built environment has a strong effect on whether or not members of a community walk or bike:¹

- Many Americans live in places where it's not easy to get the recommended amounts of physical activity every day.²
- People tend to walk and bike where they have pleasant and safe places to do so. Sidewalks, crosswalks, bike facilities such as bike paths and lanes, and as well as trees, adequate safe lighting, benches, water fountains and trash removal can make a difference.³
- Benefits of regular physical activity include: lower risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes; cuts risk of falling and bone fractures; helps manage discomfort of arthritis; develops and maintains strong bones, muscles, and joints; improves mood and sense of well-being; and helps control weight.³

Minnesotans support active transportation

There is a great deal of support for active transportation in Minnesota: ⁴

- 93 percent believe future transportation projects should integrate walkers, bicycles and motorized vehicles.



Communities can coordinate with local and regional public works, transportation and planning professionals to support built environment and system changes that encourage regular active transportation opportunities.

- 87 percent believe the way a community is built has a big effect on how much physical activity people get.
- 72 percent believe there ought to be laws that require communities to build necessary sidewalks and bike paths.

Minnesota’s multimodal transportation system maximizes the health of people, the environment and our economy.

— “Minnesota GO” Collaborative Vision for Transportation,⁵

Active transportation in Minnesota

Many communities are working to promote active transportation to provide safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity. Active transportation can be encouraged through:

- Sidewalks, walking paths, and bike facilities
- Safe and convenient pedestrian street crossing features such as crosswalks, stop signs, stop lights and other street crossing elements
- Motorist traffic calming and speed-reduction measures
- Street landscaping and pedestrian-level street lighting
- Bike racks, lockers, or other bike parking and storage facilities
- Land use development patterns to locate homes, worksites, schools, stores and other community services and amenities within reasonable walking distances (pedestrian-oriented development) and within easy access to transit (transit-oriented development)
- Signage that helps pedestrians and bicyclists navigate to their destinations.

Why MDH supports active transportation

Lack of physical activity, combined with a poor diet, is the second leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. In order to make real, sustainable change in the overall health of the community and save health care dollars, we must increase opportunities for physical activity.



Increased access to physical activity	Increased physical activity	Improved health	Lower health care costs, improved quality of life
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Minnesota Physical Activity e-news

MN PA e-news is a free statewide information network open to individuals and organizations interested in physical activity. MN PA e-news includes physical activity information on grants, resources, programs, conferences and more. To subscribe: email health.activeliving@state.mn.us or visit www.health.state.mn.us/physicalactivity.

¹ Public Health Law and Policy. *Zoning for Healthy Places Talking Points*. Planning for Healthy Places.

<http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/zoning-talking-points>

² Partnership for Prevention. (2001). *Creating Communities for Active Aging*. Partnership for Prevention.

http://www.prevent.org/images/stories/Files/publications/Active_Aging.pdf

³ Public Health Law and Policy. *Complete Streets Talking Points*. Planning for Healthy Places.

<http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/complete-streets-talking-points>

⁵ “Minnesota GO” Collaborative Vision for Transportation, The Minnesota Department of Transportation 2011

www.minnesoago.org

References

⁴ Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Minnesota: Addressing the Root Causes of Obesity, St. Paul, MN: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Health; May 2010. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/cdr/obesity/pdfdocs/summaryBCBSaddressrootcausesobesity.pdf>