

Creating Safe, Healthy, and Active Transportation

How Regional Planning Agencies Can Design for Health

Health is a Transportation Issue

A healthy transportation system allows for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages to travel safely and easily to every destination. Regional planning agencies can play an essential and unique role in protecting community health. By incorporating public health strategies into plans, policies, and projects, regional planning agencies can ensure that all roadways are designed safely and effectively.

Over a 20-year period, a \$30 million investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and education will have a return on investment of over \$353 million – a cumulative return of nearly 1200%.ⁱ

Designing for Health and Safety Works

- > Sidewalks prevent 88% of “walking along roadway crashes.”ⁱⁱ
- > Children living on a street with speed bumps have a 53% to 60% lower chance of being injured or killed by motorists.ⁱⁱⁱ
- > Narrowing wide roads reduces crash rates by 47% on major arterials.ⁱⁱⁱ
- > One mile of reduced automobile travel provides 12.2¢ worth of crash reductions and 5.6¢ worth of reduced air, noise, and water pollution.^{iv}
- > There’s safety in numbers: As the number of people walking and bicycling in a community increases, bicycle and pedestrian injuries and deaths decrease.^v

Strategies for Safer Streets

Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure

- Sidewalks
- Clear, visible traffic signs
- Bike lanes

Safe & Visible Crossings

- Marked crosswalks
- Pedestrian medians

Reduced Driving Speeds

- Roundabouts
- Speed humps
- Lower speed limits

Narrowed Roads

- Fewer lanes
- Reduced lane widths



What Regional Planning Agencies Can Do

Regional transportation policies and plans that support healthy community design can provide positive dividends and enhance the health of the entire region. By providing successful models and examples, regional agencies can provide leadership and motivate state and local transportation agencies to take action. Below are three actions regional planning agencies can take to improve safety and promote health:

☆ Integrate Safe and Active Transportation into the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

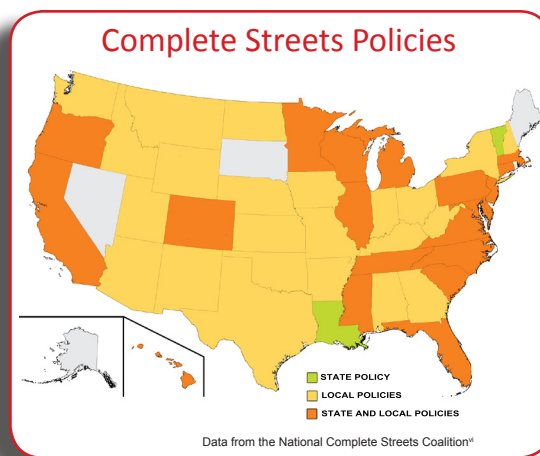
When developing or updating the LRTP, regional planning agencies should include public health as a transportation goal. This can be accomplished by developing policies, performance measures, and funding priorities that support safe, active, and healthy transportation in the region. A growing number of regional transportation planning agencies are addressing health in the LRTP by taking the following steps:

- Forming a “healthy community” advisory committee or technical group that includes local public health experts and stakeholders.
- Educating their Board members on the impact of transportation on health.
- Developing an issue paper that provides recommendations and guidance for addressing health in the LRTP.

☆ Adopt a Complete Streets Policy

To date, nearly 25 regional and metropolitan planning organizations in the U.S. have adopted Complete Streets policies. Complete Streets policies require that streets are designed and operated to provide safe access for users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and transit riders. An ideal regional Complete Streets policy:

- Ensures that, for projects under regional control, the entire right of way is planned, designed, and operated to provide safe access for all users.
- Supports and provides examples to local municipalities on designing safe and complete streets.



☆ Encourage and Support Municipalities

As regional leaders, metropolitan and regional planning agencies can support and encourage local municipalities to design safe and healthy communities by:

- Educating and training local planners and transportation engineers on best practices in non-motorized and healthy community design.
- Developing guidelines on pedestrian, Smart Growth, and healthy community design for use by local municipalities.
- Creating grant programs to incentivize local agencies to take action.



REFERENCES

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