

CDC Recommendations for Improving Health through Transportation Policy

The U.S. transportation system has been shaped by multiple policy inputs and concrete actions which have arisen from transportation and community planners, funding agencies and others at Federal, state and local levels. Today, the system is designed to move people and goods efficiently; however, there is a growing awareness across communities that transportation systems impact quality of life and health. Government and non-government agencies are seeking innovative policies and programs that protect and promote health while accomplishing the primary transportation objectives.

The Opportunity

Expanding the availability of, safety for, and access to a variety of transportation options and integrating health-enhancing choices into transportation policy has the potential to save lives by preventing chronic diseases, reducing and preventing motor-vehicle-related injury and deaths, improving environmental health, while stimulating economic development, and ensuring access for all people.

Recommendations

The document **CDC Recommendations for Improving Health through Transportation Policy** (<http://www.cdc.gov/transportation>) gives specific recommendations for including the consideration of public health within transportation issues. Key high-level areas include:

- Reduce injuries associated with motor vehicle crashes. Examples of interventions include:
 - primary seatbelt laws; distracted driving laws;
 - lower speed limits and other efforts to reduce speeding within communities;
 - comprehensive graduated driver licensing systems;
 - community designs that promote reduced traffic speeds in neighborhoods; and
 - bringing health, transportation and community planners together to address roadway safety issues through community design.
- Improve air quality by:
 - retrofitting existing diesel vehicles to reduce emissions;
 - strengthening congestion mitigation and air quality programs;
 - reducing pollution generated by ports, high-volume roadways and railroads;
 - promoting transportation choices that reduce emissions;
 - shifting to active transportation and public transportation modes; and
 - reducing vehicle miles traveled per capita.
- Expand public transportation through:
 - increasing transit funding;
 - more transportation funding flexibility;
 - model transportation planning policies that encourage transit-oriented developments;
 - bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to bus stops and transit stations; and
 - public transportation systems that accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians
- Promote active transportation. Examples of interventions include:
 - well-lit sidewalks, shared-use paths, and safe roadway crossings;
 - bicycle-supporting infrastructure like programs that reduce motor vehicle traffic and vehicle speed on neighborhood streets (e.g. bicycle boulevards), shared-use paths, converting highway lanes to protected bikeways, and cycletracks;

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- creating safe pedestrian and bicycling connections to schools, public transportation and public park and recreations areas;
 - reducing vehicle miles traveled per capita;
 - creating active living environments;
 - using comprehensive street design measures, such as “complete streets,”;
 - Safe Routes to Schools programs; and
 - federal guidelines for the inclusion of active transportation infrastructure in building and development efforts.
- Encourage healthy community design by:
 - modeling land use and transportation policies like complete streets that encourage dense networks of connected streets which serve the needs of all transportation modes;
 - implementing measures to protect residents from air pollution and noise from high-volume roadways, ports, and airports;
 - designing street networks that facilitate active transportation and public transportation by increasing connectivity and limiting block size;
 - locating destinations for children within neighborhoods so that children can reach destinations without having to cross busy streets;
 - ensuring that all people have access to safe, healthy, convenient, and affordable transportation options; and
 - reducing vehicle miles traveled per capita.

Rationale

The current U.S. transportation infrastructure focuses on motor vehicle travel and provides limited support for other transportation options for most Americans.

- Physical activity and active transportation have declined compared to previous generations. The lack of physical activity is a major contributor to the steady rise in rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and other chronic health conditions.
- Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of injury-related death for many age groups. Pedestrians and bicyclists are at an even greater risk of death from crashes.
- Many Americans view walking and bicycling within their communities as unsafe because of traffic and the lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle facilities.
- A lack of efficient alternatives to automobile travel disproportionately affects vulnerable populations such as the poor, the elderly, people who have disabilities and children by limiting access to jobs, health care, social interaction, and healthy foods.
- Although motor vehicle emissions have decreased significantly over the past three decades, air pollution from motor vehicles continues to contribute to the degradation of our environment and adverse respiratory and cardiovascular health effects.