



2010 Campaign for Active Transportation: Guidance for Communities

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Step 2: Develop Your Community's Active Transportation Case Statement

If you don't know where you want to go, you will probably end up someplace else. A clear and compelling written articulation of your community's aspirations for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs is critical to making the case that federal transportation dollars would be well spent if invested in your local priorities. The core of your community's case statement should be:

- a concrete, actionable plan that furthers your active transportation vision;
- a priority for your community, and;
- a promise of implementation if adequately funded.

1. **Plan Development:** The question may be framed as: *What could your community achieve with a \$50 million federal investment in bicycling and walking?* In answering this question, you could choose to isolate \$50 million of work that you think would be particularly compelling in terms of transportation effectiveness. *Investments that demonstrably enhance mobility or mitigate congestion for a reasonable price will be most persuasive in arguing for transportation dollars.* Alternatively, your community could present bigger active transportation plans if you can make a strong case that the federal investment will leverage other funds to make implementation of the entire plan possible.

If your community already has current bicycle and pedestrian plans, your job could be much easier. Your active transportation vision may be built on the foundation of existing plans, focusing on elements that could be implemented, accelerated or embellished. Determine which aspects of your plans provide the most compelling, cost-effective improvements to your community's transportation system. Highlighting the transportation benefits of your plan will be important because mobility and congestion mitigation are the "currency" of a federal transportation bill reauthorization. Transportation metrics to consider in making your case include: congestion mitigation, enhanced mobility and mode share.

Where plans are lacking or out-of-date, you may want to consider an accelerated planning process to formulate your vision. Even if your product does not represent an established policy consensus as with formal government plans, it can be effective so long as you capture the essence of community priorities for active transportation infrastructure and programs.

See [Local Campaign Strategies](#)¹ for both infrastructure and culture change (programmatic) ideas as brainstormed by *TrailLink 2007* participants.

2. **Making the Case:** Once you have developed your active transportation plan, you need to establish the reasons why it should be a policy priority. Articulate your plan in a way that "makes the case" for funding your infrastructure priorities and educational and promotional needs. Work with stakeholders to assemble the best local data, case studies and arguments to persuade policy-makers that significant new

¹ www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/Local%20Campaign%20Strategies.pdf

investment in bicycling and walking in your community is necessary. Presenting a national perspective, RTC has prepared [issue briefs](#)² compiling strong arguments for the major benefits of trails and active transportation: Mobility, Public Health, Economic Development, Climate, and Community. Draw on these arguments, but wherever possible, tailor your presentation for your audience with local facts and figures. You need to make the case for your particular priorities. **Visuals, like maps and images, are often among the most compelling tools for making your case.** Bring your vision to life to inspire decision-makers to commit their support.

To add even more weight to your case, before approaching federal policy-makers to invest in your plan, strive to obtain official buy-in from your local officials. A City or County Council resolution expressing a commitment to explore all available means to implement the plan demonstrates a broader base of support and commitment. For example, see [this resolution](#)³ passed by the Chittenden County, Vt. Metropolitan Planning Organization. If you can identify [other sources of financial support](#)⁴, you can claim the ability to leverage any federal investment.

3. **Content of ‘Application’ to Congress:** When applying for federal funds for your community, focus on the factors that tell the most complete and compelling story about the opportunity for your community to shift vehicle trips to walking or biking. Be as specific as possible, using both quantitative and qualitative information. Supplement with optional items (see ‘Going the Extra Mile’ below) or add your own ideas that further make the case that your community would realize substantial transportation benefits from a concentrated federal investment in your active transportation system and programs.

Your starting point should be to consider for your case statement the type of issues that appealed to Congress in evaluating the pilot communities that received funding under SAFETEA-LU in 2005. While there is no set application form to secure federal support, the following types of information from communities vying to gain pilot status were compelling to Congress:

- a. Transportation system needs
 - i. Need for transportation alternatives
 1. Are transportation options limited?
 2. Is there an over-reliance on single occupant vehicle use?
 3. Could active modes mitigate certain congestion problems more effectively or affordably than new or improved roads?
 - ii. Opportunities to strengthen other modes, especially transit, with better bicycle and pedestrian connections (e.g., bus, rail, ferry, etc.)
 - iii. Mobility needs of those who cannot or choose not to drive
 1. Children (school commute benefits);
 2. Senior population;
 3. Disabled / alternately-abled groups;

² www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailadvocacy/2010Campaign.html

³ www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/Burlington%202010%20County%20Resolution.pdf

⁴ www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/Funding%20Models.pdf

4. Households that don't have vehicles (%), including equity implications for those who cannot afford to own one
- b. Active transportation track record and assets
 - i. Current bicycle, pedestrian and transit mode shares
 - ii. Past accomplishments (active transportation system and programs)
 - iii. Awards or recognition, e.g., [League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Communities](#)⁵
 - iv. Data collection (e.g., return on investment in past accomplishments)
 - v. Existing bike/ped master plans (goals, key features, use best practices)
 - vi. Project readiness and importance
 - vii. Planning and implementing capabilities (lead agency)
 - viii. Rail corridors or other right-of-ways that could be converted to trails
 - c. Active transportation plan
 - i. Plans to develop active transportation systems and programs (Step 2, #1 in this document)
 - ii. Potential to create interconnected active transportation systems
 1. Could trail systems serve as spines for safe and accessible active transportation?
 2. Will trail systems and other facilities, such as bike lanes and sidewalks, be integrated?
 3. Will local trail systems connect to regional trail corridors?
 - iii. Revenue streams that could match or further leverage federal funds
 - d. Plan benefits⁶ (Step 2, #2 in this document)
 - i. Transportation (mode shift; mobility; traffic safety—analyze bike/ped crash data)
 - ii. Public health (need for daily exercise opportunities, obesity trends, special needs of children and seniors)
 - iii. Environmental (air quality, climate—Has your community committed to take climate action? e.g., the [U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Center](#)⁷, the [C40 Cities of the Clinton Climate Initiative](#)⁸, or [Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign](#)⁹)
 - iv. Economic development (e.g., revitalization, property values, equity)
 - v. Community (e.g., connections, quality of life)
 - vi. Potential to further emergency preparedness
 - vii. Potential to serve as a model for other communities
 - viii. Other synergies (e.g., federal projects or lands)
 - e. Contextual factors encouraging success
 - i. Weather
 - ii. Bikeable geography
 - iii. Density
 - iv. Land use planning (e.g., mixed uses)

⁵ www.bikeleague.org/programs/communities/

⁶ To the extent that important data is neither currently available nor practically attainable, you may propose that data collection be part of your implementation work.

⁷ www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/list.asp

⁸ www.c40cities.org/cities/

⁹ <http://coolcities.us/>

- v. Existing bicycle or pedestrian culture
- f. Support for plan
 - i. Political support (e.g., resolutions, elected officials, agencies)
 - ii. Community support (e.g., public, companies)

Your supporting materials ought to include:

- a. Maps and pictures: Visuals could be the most powerful aspect of your application.
- b. City or County resolution (if applicable) and letters of support
- c. Cost estimates with various funding options
- d. Contacts

Going the Extra Mile: Federal data are insufficient to fully demonstrate why trails, walking and biking are outstanding transportation investments. Your community could be in a particularly strong position if you provide data from local sources that helps to make the case for your priorities. Examples of additional material that could help persuade decision-makers include:

- a. Up-to-date data on mode share for all types of trips, not just commuting. Commuting accounts for a surprisingly small percentage of overall trips, but national census data only addresses commuting and the data is only collected once per decade.
 - b. Information on local trends that helps you make the case that your community is prepared to capitalize on investments in active transportation infrastructure and programs. For example, can you document that trail use increased after key connections were made?
 - c. Percentage of transit trips accessed by biking or walking. National data downplays the importance of this activity, as well as transit, because it only counts the “dominant mode;” i.e., if one takes the subway three miles to work and walks one mile to the station, that walking trip does not count, but if one drives four miles to the same station, the subway trip does not count.
 - d. Polling: Can you show that the public supports your vision as a local transportation priority, and that significant numbers of people will use the active transportation systems you wish to develop?
 - e. Cost/benefit analysis showing a high return on investment. Economic value could be attributed to factors such as transportation/congestion impact, public health benefits, and air quality improvements.
 - f. Transportation modeling to show use projections and value to other mobility investments.
4. **Timing: RTC needs your case statement materials by June 30, 2008.** In order for RTC to aggregate your local case statements into one powerful, national report about how the country would benefit from an active transportation program, we need your help. We must be ready to hit the ground running when Congress reconvenes in September 2008. Send RTC your case studies by June 30—or earlier where possible—so that we can use your examples in early meetings with national opinion and Hill leaders. Additionally, your case studies can become a rich source of ‘best practices’ for us to share with other communities. Some communities plan to produce

materials by the end of February to take advantage of this opportunity for greater visibility and campaign leadership.

Send all relevant materials (plans, documents, maps, case statements, etc.) to Kartik Srinivas at kartik@railstotrails.org.