



Partnership for  
**Active Transportation**

# Safe Routes to Everywhere

Building Healthy Places for Healthy People  
Through Active Transportation Networks



**Partnership for Active Transportation**

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## Executive Summary

**Balanced transportation systems** are fundamental to healthy communities. A strong economy and high quality of life depend on safe and easy access for all residents to jobs, schools, transit, shops, services, places of worship, parks and playgrounds, and friends and family. Public health is improved by providing a built environment that facilitates routine physical activity. Investing in networks of infrastructure that enable walking and bicycling—or active transportation—is critical to providing transportation systems that meet everyone’s needs, regardless of whether they drive, and to increase mobility, improve access for people with disabilities, spur economic development and promote healthy practices.

The Partnership for Active Transportation is a unique collaboration of organizations working across the fields of transportation, public health, economic development, community leadership, equity and livability. The principles that unite us are access for all, prioritizing active transportation networks, increasing investment in safe places to walk and bicycle, considering all relevant policy opportunities and collaborating across sectors. The Partnership calls for the creation of safe and practical routes for people traveling under their own power—by foot or by wheel—to get where they need to go. This will help build healthy places for healthy people.

The Partnership for Active Transportation calls for these policy innovations:

- » Create a focused **Active Transportation Program** to:
  - » **increase federal investment** dedicated to meeting the need for safe and healthy routes to walk and bicycle;
  - » **prioritize the creation of trails, and walking and bicycling networks**, by creating an Active Transportation Networks Investment Fund and enacting a Safe Streets policy; and
  - » **solidify the integrity of the Transportation Alternatives Program** as core active transportation funding available in all states
- » Create a **new loan program** customized to the needs of small-scale projects, and encourage innovative financing strategies
- » Create a **health impact assessment pilot program** to learn how best to integrate health considerations into transportation decision-making, and preserve the Prevention Fund of the Affordable Care Act to improve public health and save money by increasing physical activity
- » **Develop and implement performance goals and metrics** for all transportation projects that incentivize balanced, healthy and safe mobility options

## By the Numbers

Investment in active transportation over the past 20 years has made America's transportation system—

### Safer

**21%**

*fewer bicycling fatalities*

### Popular

**walking is 11%**

*of all trips*



**64%**



*more bike commuters*

### Accessible

**+781%**

*miles*

*of accessible trails*



### Affordable

**\$1.43**

*public and private savings*

*per vehicle mile shifted to active transportation*



### Healthier

*more than*

**3.1**

*trillion*



*calories burned by walking and biking each year*

### Cleaner

**9**

*million pounds*

*of air emissions reduced each year by biking*

Sources:

[http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/TRA960\\_01April2011.pdf](http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/TRA960_01April2011.pdf)

[www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf](http://www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf)

Estimate based on latest data from Household Travel Survey

## Guiding Principles

**The Partnership for Active Transportation** works to secure greater federal investment to create safe trails, and walking and bicycling networks, and to encourage innovative local and state strategies that foster active transportation. The Partnership champions projects that create healthier and economically vibrant places for all people of all ages by using evidence- and practice-based strategies. The Partnership will seek to advance these principles in our policy advocacy:

### 1. Access for All

Active transportation networks are essential community assets that benefit everyone by providing mobility options, enhancing safety, encouraging economic development and increasing physical activity. Policies should prioritize active transportation to ensure equitable access for all people in all communities.

### 2. Prioritize Active Transportation Networks

Transportation systems work best when they are connected. To maximize return on investment, policies and funding at all government levels should focus on the development of interconnected trails, and biking and walking networks.

### 3. Diversify Policy and Increase Funding Support

Opportunities to create safe places to walk, bicycle and use a wheelchair should be considered in all relevant policymaking. The development of robust active transportation networks requires both an increase in investments by federal, state and local governments and policy that encourages support from the private sector.

### 4. Collaborative Decision-Making

To create healthier and more economically vibrant places for all people, community planning and decision-making should be driven by collaborative efforts of leaders from the many community sectors that will benefit from active transportation.



## Meet the Partnership

**The Partnership for Active Transportation** is a unique collaboration of organizations working at the intersection of transportation, public health and community vitality to promote greater investment in creating safe trail, walking and bicycling networks for all and facilitating greater physical activity through active transportation.

The following partner organizations developed and endorse this platform:



American Academy  
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



America  
**WALKS**



Partnership for  
**Active Transportation**

Show your support for the Partnership  
by endorsing the Declaration of  
Active Transportation.  
[www.Partnership4AT.org](http://www.Partnership4AT.org)



## Real Results

**Minneapolis**  
Midtown Greenway

**700** jobs created



**Philadelphia**  
Schuylkill River Trail

**47,000** tons of CO<sub>2</sub>  
avoided each year



**Marin County, Calif.**

**64%**

increase  
in biking

**21%**

increase  
in walking  
in five years

**Transportation connects people and places.** It provides access to jobs, education, shopping and recreation. More than one-quarter of all trips we make are less than a mile—an easy walking distance—and nearly one-half of all trips are within three miles—an easy biking distance. Yet, we make more than 78 percent of these short trips by car.

Active transportation, with seamless connections to public transportation services, is the most neglected piece of our transportation system. Safe pathways for walking, bicycling or using a wheelchair work together with transit to provide access for all people regardless of whether they drive. The vast majority of trips taken by bus or train begin and end with a walk to or from homes, offices and other routine destinations; therefore, sidewalks and safe crossings are very low-cost means to maximize benefits of investments in transit. Active transportation also often replaces short driving trips.

To build healthy communities for healthy people, America needs to invest in safe active transportation routes to everywhere for everyone. Simple walking and biking pathways can provide the safest, healthiest connections to important destinations and are important to the many Americans who are dependent on other modes of travel aside from driving. When trails, sidewalks and on-street routes are linked, and homes are reasonably close to destinations, all people can travel safely through their communities.

The Partnership for Active Transportation calls for re-envisioning our transportation system to ensure it meets our need for healthy places for healthy people. Regular walking or bicycling helps prevent obesity, diabetes, depression and other chronic diseases that reduce our quality of life and are costly to treat. Active transportation also promotes healthy economies by encouraging development and enhancing community vitality. The Partnership's principles address the importance of ensuring equitable access for all people, prioritizing active transportation networks, diversifying funding support adequate to the need and collaborating in planning.

***Welcome to your new transportation system!***



# Establish an Active Transportation Program

**Walking and bicycling** already account for 12 percent of trips taken in America. But these modes could continue to grow substantially with greater dedicated investment in active transportation networks and focused program administration.

An Active Transportation Program would coordinate federal activities related to active transportation, maximizing the resources dedicated to creating safe and convenient pathways for walking, bicycling or using a wheelchair. The Active Transportation Program would assume responsibility for administering federal funding programs, data collection, performance monitoring and building organizational capacity throughout the government. The program would be housed within the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) in collaboration with other relevant federal agencies.

**Increase Investment:** Current federal funding for active transportation is entirely inadequate to meet the demand for highly strategic and cost-effective investments in complete networks. The current federal surface transportation law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), substantially cut funding for active transportation while introducing new ways to use these funds for projects that do not improve transportation choices and the livability of communities. Only a tiny sliver of federal surface transportation funding is dedicated to active transportation (less than 1.5 percent). These funds are critical to ensuring a baseline of opportunity in every state for people to safely walk and bicycle.

Active transportation investments are highly cost effective. Increasing this slice of less than 1.5 percent to 3 percent would still be a miniscule share compared to highway spending but would transform communities across the country, providing connections to build economic vitality and access for all. Given current fiscal constraints, striking a better balance among various types of transportation would enable us to optimize real benefits.

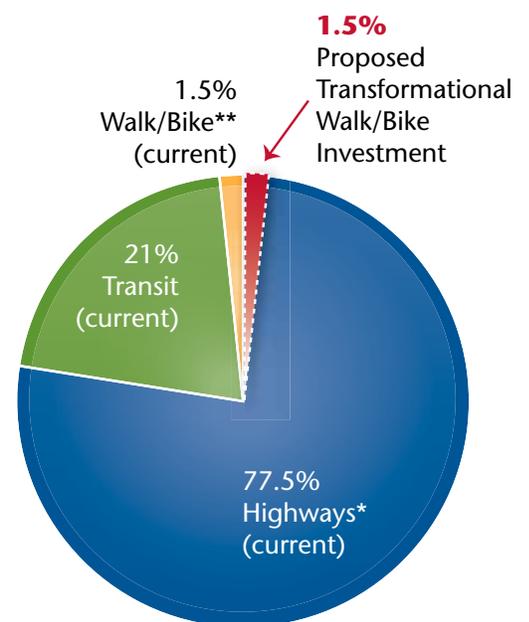
**Prioritize Networks:** All transportation modes work best when knitted together into complete systems. Filling strategic gaps in existing walking and bicycling networks is the best way to minimize cost and maximize impact. We need to concentrate a portion of active transportation resources on the timely completion of transportation systems that deliver increased mobility choices and return impressive economic and health benefits.

The existing federal programs supporting walking and biking provide critical funding for individual projects. But they are poorly funded and ill-structured to realize the complete networks of such pathways that are needed if we are to efficiently transform our transportation landscape.

## What Is a Network?

Transportation infrastructure—whether it be roads, rails, trails or sidewalks—works best when woven together into a “network.” Networks connect people to popular destinations such as schools, places of employment, shops and parks. Networks of trails, sidewalks and on-street bikeways provide safe and affordable mobility for people of all ages and abilities.

Unlike roads and public transportation, the need to complete active transportation networks has been largely neglected. Fortunately, filling strategic gaps between existing walking and bicycling pathways is relatively inexpensive and would produce significant returns on investment.



Surface Transportation Authorization Levels

\* Includes flexible programs

\*\* Dedicated Transportation Alternatives funding includes other eligible uses





A new **Active Transportation Networks Investment Fund** would complement current programs by providing focused investments to fill gaps in existing systems.

While more dedicated funding is essential to build better active transportation networks, we also need to ensure that road investments accommodate all users. Too often, roads are designed without regard to the way in which they impact people who walk, bike or use a wheelchair. Consequently, the Partnership calls on the federal government to enact a **Safe Streets policy (e.g., HR 2468)** to ensure that federally funded road projects safely accommodate people using a variety of transportation modes. This would complement an Active Transportation Networks Investment Fund by ensuring a more efficient use of resources; active transportation dollars could be focused on off-street facilities, such as trails, and strategic gaps in active transport networks in places not slated for road work.

**Transportation Alternatives:** The Transportation Alternatives Program is the largest source of funding dedicated to walking and biking. However, the power of the program is undercut by certain provisions added by MAP-21. A transfer clause and a “use it or lose it” clause allows for funds to be redirected away from active transportation to

projects with unrelated goals. The program is supposed to address the critical active transportation needs that exist in every state. To that end, the Transportation Alternatives Program should focus on improving options to walk and bike as well as other eligible projects that improve the quality of communities. Before MAP-21, the program could not be used to fund unrelated regulatory compliance activities, such as mitigating impacts of a highway project. This rule should be reinstated.

We oppose the inclusion of an “opt-out” from the Recreational Trails Program. This program is funded by taxes from fuel purchases for off-road recreational vehicles. These funds should remain dedicated to the development of trails. In 2013, only Florida is using the opt-out, and it has committed to spend an equivalent amount of money from other sources on recreational trails. This opt-out provision benefits no one but creates unnecessary administrative costs.

There is a strong demand for walking and biking infrastructure in communities across America. With a modest increase in funding and thoughtful policy improvements, we can meet more of that demand. Doing so will help make American communities more mobile, safer, economically successful and healthier.



## CASE STUDY

### Indianapolis: A Thriving Network

The people of Indianapolis enjoy what is undoubtedly one of the best trail systems in America. Today, a network of more than 60 miles of local greenways in Indianapolis attracts more than 3 million users a year.

In 2013, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail opened with eight miles of great places to bike and walk. The Cultural Trail is a unique urban experience, running along major roads but separated from traffic. The Cultural Trail connects with the Monon Trail, an 18-mile rail-trail that has already made Indianapolis the envy of cities everywhere. The safe and convenient travel option provided by Indianapolis’s trail network has made the city popular with people of all ages.

Republican Mayor Greg Ballard continues to push his idea of a “Culture of Connectivity.” Key to this concept is creating safe active transportation routes between Indianapolis neighborhoods.





## Implement Innovative Financing Strategies

**Funding that is dedicated** to increasing opportunities to safely bike and walk is essential to creating a properly functioning and efficient transportation system. However, these competitive programs alone are unlikely to provide enough funds to meet the growing demand for walking and biking. We need innovative financing strategies that allow us to stretch federal dollars and accelerate the completion of active transportation systems.

The good news is that a number of federal transportation agencies are already using innovative financing to build impactful projects. The existing Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program is very popular with transportation agencies. TIFIA captures the projected future value of transportation projects, such as revenue from ferry tickets, and bridge and highway tolls, to speed up the construction of regionally significant initiatives. The loan, guaranteed against future receipts, is used to start construction earlier than otherwise possible. Borrowing agencies also benefit from federal support and low interest rates. Active transportation projects generate value in the form of increased property values, employment and sales taxes that could be harnessed through the program if it were more flexible.

While the TIFIA program is good, it is not optimized for small-scale projects. The Partnership calls for a new value capture program modeled on TIFIA but customized to the needs of small-scale projects. Specifically, a lower application fee, a smaller budget minimum for projects and a more flexible rule for the percentage of the loan that may be financed would increase the impact of the program. Until such changes are made, only very large and well-funded projects will utilize TIFIA, and many smaller-scale, but vitally important, walking and biking infrastructure projects will go unsupported. TIFIA already is flexible regarding rural projects. Extending flexible policies to accommodate active transportation networks would be an important innovation.

*“San Diego County is routinely cited as one of the best places to walk and bike. We didn’t do it alone. We used private, local government, county, state and federal funds as part of our community-wide efforts for better walking and biking.”*

—SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERVISOR GREG COX



## Maximize Incentives for Innovative Finance



**Local communities** will need the assistance of innovative financing opportunities to build the most effective transportation networks. The federal government has an important role to play in providing such opportunities.

We encourage USDOT to expand its professional training and education efforts that foster innovative finance strategies. State innovative finance programs, such as State Infrastructure Banks, also should expand their efforts. Most funds at USDOT are distributed according to formulas. However, some programs have more discretion, such as the Transportation Infrastructure Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. This relatively young program has funded many regionally and nationally significant active transportation projects. The Partnership calls for USDOT to ingrain the principles of this platform into the guiding criteria for TIGER and other discretionary programs to enable the construction of better active transportation networks. The Partnership also calls on USDOT to review its administrative and application fees to ensure that they do not serve as a practical barrier to small projects.

### CASE STUDY

#### Atlanta: Innovative Finance

A unique collaboration of governments, community organizations and nonprofits is building a new active transportation network for Atlanta as a solution to the region's notorious congestion.

The Atlanta BeltLine involves the repurposing of 22 miles of underused railroad corridor to create new walking, biking and transit connections between 45 diverse neighborhoods. Its ring of trails and transit routes will provide safe access between these neighborhoods and to schools, commercial districts and parks. Residents will enjoy easy access to the BeltLine via connecting trails and on-street bikeways.

The development of the Atlanta BeltLine is supported by a mix of funding sources, including private foundation money, local government contributions, dedicated taxes and federal grants. The project will support itself in the long term with dedicated local taxes, transit revenue and continued fundraising.



## Promote Healthy Transportation

In 2006, North Carolina's departments of Transportation, Environment and Natural Resources, Health and Human Services, and Commerce came together to form a unique partnership around a common goal of healthy and economically successful places. The resultant Healthy Communities Collaborative now provides quality data collection, strategic planning and enhanced research to local organizations in order to help them promote walking and biking in their communities.

Each member agency of the Collaborative is committed to promoting active transportation in its work. The Department of Commerce promotes walking and biking to work as part of its healthy workplaces campaign for newly recruited businesses. The Department of Transportation developed a statewide bike plan. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is improving access to existing trails. And the Department of Health and Human Services is supporting numerous public campaigns to encourage walking and biking.

The Partnership for Active Transportation calls for all states to better integrate transportation and health projects. To do so, health criteria must be incorporated into transportation performance metrics, and the building of active transportation networks should utilize not just engineering but also encouragement, education, enforcement and evaluation strategies. Such collaborations will be best prepared to leverage federal health and transportation funding.

*“Assuring access to safe walkable, bikeable routes and destinations is essential to promoting total health among our members, communities and our society.”*

—TED EYTAN, MD,  
KAISER PERMANENTE



## Create a Health Impact Assessment Pilot Program



**Our transportation choices** significantly impact public health and spending on the treatment of chronic diseases. The impact of the various modes of transportation on physical activity levels, traffic safety, pollution and other health issues should be considered when governments set goals and plan, select and evaluate projects. The Partnership calls for incorporating health impacts into all aspects of transportation decision-making.

To learn how best to weigh these factors, a pilot program should be created that provides incentives for partnerships of state and local departments of health and transportation. Together, health and transportation professionals would conduct health impact assessments for transportation policy and infrastructure projects. The pilot program would be jointly administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and USDOT.

Although health impact assessments are increasingly common, federal transportation policy does little to support their use. A CDC/USDOT pilot program collaboration would produce data, case studies and best practices that could be replicated with the objective of incorporating health outcomes into the transportation planning process across the country.

### CASE STUDY

#### Massachusetts: Health Impact Assessments in Action

In 2009, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted the Healthy Transportation Compact. This was the first state action to require health impact assessments of transportation projects. A number of state agencies worked together to identify projects to evaluate. The first completed assessment was of a project to remove an elevated highway. There are many positive health benefits of removing elevated highways, including reduced air pollution, an increase in physical activity levels and improved traffic safety.

Massachusetts's leaders undertook a comprehensive approach with the Healthy Transportation Compact. Not only did they improve planning functions, but they also expanded state agency collaboration, launched a statewide bicycle and pedestrian task force, adopted a Complete Streets policy and committed new funds to the creation of more greenways.





## Preserve the Prevention Fund

**The Prevention and Public Health Fund** is the nation's largest single investment in preventive health. When enacted, the fund was authorized to spend up to \$2 billion a year on community initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles.

Administered by the CDC, the fund provides resources to community-initiated health partnerships to implement proven strategies to encourage healthy lifestyles. Prevention Fund programs, including Community Transformation Grants (CTG), have strict performance goals, including reducing obesity by 5 percent in five years. These meaningful and attainable metrics ensure the wise and focused use of funds.

Initiatives to create safer places to walk, bike and use a wheelchair have been incorporated in many CTG and other Prevention Fund-supported programs. Communities of all types—rural, exurban, suburban and center-city—have successfully reduced obesity rates by improving access to active transportation. Communities have created signed bike routes, established bike sharing programs, developed active transportation plans and adopted Complete Streets policies using support from the Prevention Fund.

Unfortunately, the money set aside for the fund has been steadily decreasing, and it is now at about \$949 million a year, a 52.5 percent reduction. The Partnership calls for increasing the Prevention Fund's appropriation to the full authorization level. This will help more communities improve their built environments to reduce chronic diseases and their resultant costs, which are borne by governments, employers and American families.

### CASE STUDY

#### Cook County, Ill.: Prevention in Action

Encompassing Chicago and surrounding communities, Cook County in Illinois is the second most populous county in the U.S. Its leaders recently decided the county would be well served by creating new walking and biking pathways in the many suburban communities. Yet, it faced a major challenge. The vast majority of the land and population is in incorporated areas not subject to county jurisdiction.

Cook County secured a \$16 million economic stimulus grant from the CDC. The county retained little of the money, but instead redistributed most of the funds to the local governments, which subsequently were able to undertake a variety of policy and environmental changes to create active transportation networks. They adopted Complete Streets policies, developed customized active transportation plans, signed hundreds of miles of new bike routes and educated thousands of residents on the benefits of walking and biking. The Cook County initiative demonstrated how communities can use substantial investments in active transportation to create new ways for residents to be mobile and to be healthy.



## Ensure All Transportation Systems Meet America's Needs

**We spend so much of our lives** trying to achieve goals. Yet one of our biggest national expenditures, transportation, is made with such little regard for goals. The Partnership calls for the use of performance metrics to ensure that all transportation decision-making is accountable to mobility, health, safety, equity, environmental and other goals. The priority under this new transportation system will be to create a balanced set of means to get around that are safe, healthy and efficient for all people and that respond to the needs of the community.

Federal investment in trails, walking and bicycling has created vital projects. But it has generally failed to recognize the necessity of creating networks that allow people to use active transportation for a broad range of daily routines. To create healthy communities, we need to significantly increase walking and bicycling for regular transportation. Walking currently accounts for 11 percent of all trips, and bicycling 1 percent. USDOT, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services and other relevant agencies, should establish realistic but ambitious

goals for increasing walking and bicycling beyond these baseline levels. Increases in active transportation have been shown to reduce obesity rates, enhance local environments and enrich local economies.

In order to meet the demand for complete active transportation networks, there must be an across-the-board change in the way we plan and build transportation infrastructure. Public consideration of regional priorities is necessary to strike an appropriate balance among transportation modes. Regional plans should ensure that the often-limited available funding is used to create transportation systems in which all the various modes of travel are accommodated and work together. Planning and transportation agencies should adopt funding criteria that prioritize filling gaps in active transportation networks to enable important destinations to be accessed safely.

Funding for transportation projects should be determined by clear goals and performance metrics applied to ensure the efficient realization of those goals.



### Performance Metrics

The Partnership calls for regional goals and performance metrics that reflect the need to create balanced, healthy and safe mobility options. Transportation decisions must be held accountable to important measures of system performance such as:

- » Safety (example: reduction in fatalities related to transportation)
- » Completeness of network (example: number of destinations served by active transportation system)
- » Choice of healthy travel modes (example: amount of walking and bicycling, which could be translated into calories burned or weight lost)



## How You Can Help

**The success of the Partnership for Active Transportation** flows from our strong movement of national, state and local advocates united in the knowledge that creating safe and practical routes to walk and bicycle means improved mobility, health and economic vitality for all Americans. There are many ways you can help realize our shared vision for better active transportation networks.

- » Join hundreds of other organizations in endorsing the Declaration of Active Transportation at [www.partnership4AT.org](http://www.partnership4AT.org).
- » Feature this policy platform at your events and conferences.
- » Join one of our state collaborations.
- » Follow the Partnership on Facebook and share our posts.

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