

Municipal Planning for Active Transportation #10



One of the most desirable aspects of a vibrant community is the ability for residents to enjoy walking, bicycling, and other activities conveniently and safely within the community.

When people are more active, their health improves, the air is cleaner, alternative/accessible methods of access are provided, and it boosts local businesses. Developing an active transportation plan is a structured method to plan, design, and implement sidewalks, trails, bicycle lanes, and other facilities to enhance active transportation opportunities in your community.

The guidance listed in this tech sheet supports municipalities working on an active transportation plan for their community.

Introduction

Active transportation infrastructure provides communities with affordable, environmentally friendly modes of transportation, and recreational opportunities (walking or biking paths for example).

Before developing an active transportation plan, it is important to clearly define the purpose, users, and the study area. From there, achieving success through an active transportation plan starts with the following steps:

1. Define the Scope

Transportation planning is critical to developing safe, comfortable, and accessible multimodal networks for all users. A key topic under transportation planning, active transportation plans are a useful way to monitor existing conditions, track trends, and identify ways to address the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized users.

2. Engage the Community

The community should be viewed as a partner and engaged early and throughout the development of an active transportation plan. Community members are often involved in the planning and decision-making process various engagement activities such as public meetings, surveys, and open forums to support the work of the technical stakeholder.

3. Develop Vision and Goals

Opportunities surrounding active transportation are common and have the potential to influence a myriad of community needs such as transportation equality, enhanced safety, a connection to walking and biking networks, leveraging partnerships, improved public health, and increased economic stability. The key to an active transportation plan is a clearly defined vision organized around goals, objectives, and performance measures specific to the community.

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4. Assess Existing Conditions and Needs

Present a comprehensive picture of the existing active transportation policies, facilities, safety concerns, and programs to guide the selection and prioritization of future projects.

5. Identify Proposed Network and Amenities

The proposed active transportation plan and amenities should be the result of a collaborative, data-driven planning process involving both extensive public input and technical analysis. The overall purpose of the proposed network and amenities is to recommend policies, programs, and projects that address the needs of the community and align with the vision and goals of the plan.

6. Prioritize Proposed Projects

Prioritizing the proposed improvements identified in an active transportation plan will create a road map for strategic investment in the active transportation network (factors for prioritizing include safety, budget, and barriers).

7. Estimate Project Costs

Projects identified in the active transportation plan should include planning-level cost estimates to help agencies identify priority investments and potential phasing options.

8. Identify Funding Sources

Projects and programs aimed at facilitating active transportation provide opportunities for funding. Funding sources like [WalkWorks](#) can help support investments focused on addressing community needs, including enhancing mobility, reducing risk, and promoting an active lifestyle.

9. Develop and Evaluate Performance Measures

Performance measures provide an opportunity to evaluate and track how projects and programs support the vision, goals, and objectives for active transportation outlined in the plan. By establishing performance measures, agencies demonstrate their commitment to stakeholders, partner agencies, and the general public to support active transportation as an integral part of the multimodal transportation system.

10. Create an Implementation Strategy

Creating an implementation strategy is a critical but often overlooked step in ensuring the proposed infrastructure and program recommendations outlined in the active transportation plan become a reality.

“Active transportation is any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as walking or bicycling. Use of the term “active transportation” highlights the growing recognition of the connection between public health outcomes and transportation planning. As a form of human-powered transportation, active transportation engages people in healthy physical activity while they travel from place to place. People walking, bicycling, using wheelchairs, skateboarding, scootering, and rollerblading are engaged in active transportation.”

– PennDOT Active Transportation Plan

Not sure where to get started? PennDOT Connects Municipal Resources provides free assistance on transportation and land use planning topics. Active Transportation Plans qualify for this assistance. Click [here](#) to learn more about municipal assistance.

Active Transportation Resources