

Walking and Byways

Building Connections within Communities



Why Focus on Walking?

Walking is the most fundamental way that people move through the world around them. Whether walking to a restaurant or grocery store, to an attraction or simply for enjoyment, people need safe and comfortable places to walk. This is especially true in community settings where residences, businesses and attractions are closer together. Increased foot traffic often results in more frequent stops at local businesses, and on the whole people spend more money at these businesses.

Walking is good for people's health, good for the environment, boosts local economies, and has the potential to reduce vehicle trips, leading to a more pleasant travel experience for all. The US Surgeon General published a call to action in 2015 urging communities across the US to promote walking and



walkable communities. Byway partnerships can be a key part of encouraging more walking in communities across the United States.

Planning for Walkable Communities

Basic planning for people walking should include the following steps:

- 1. Identify the Destinations that People Walk To.** Looking closely at the places where people will want to walk can help to identify where improvements to sidewalks, paths, and road crossings are needed. Key destinations often include places that serve or sell food, transit stops, parks, schools and other public community assets.
- 2. Understand Who is Walking in the Community.** Through conversations with businesses and community leaders, gather information about who

walks in the community. Understanding the "who" (kids, seniors, tourists, etc.) can help to identify the improvements that are needed.

- 3. Go for a Walk!** Take a small group of people out to walk around a community on your byway. Note where you feel comfortable or uncomfortable, and what causes you to feel that way. Where would you want to walk? Are you able to access your desired destination safely and comfortably?
- 4. Connect with Transportation Partners.** After gathering information, work with the relevant roadway authorities to understand current and future plans for walking in the community, and what potential improvements could be made.

Targeting Walking Improvements

Generally speaking, people in the United States are willing to walk 1/4 to 1/2 mile to reach their destination. As such, it's important to look for potential improvements that are within this radius from the main attraction in a town. Look for opportunities like a café or restaurant within a block or two of a wayside or park, or an ice cream shop near a beach. These are the types of trips that people are likely to consider making on foot rather than driving a short distance across town. safely and comfortably?

Health Benefits of Walking

Regular and longer walks not only increase your chances of living longer, but also help get more energy, lose weight, stay healthy and positive.

"Walking is man's best medicine" - Hippocrates

"Walking is the best possible exercise"
- Thomas Jefferson

"All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking"
- Friedrich Nietzsche

REFERENCES

FHWA Small Town and Rural Design Guide, Facilities for Walking and Biking. <https://ruraldesignguide.com/>

Let's Go For a Walk guide, Minnesota Department of Health

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