

LET'S TALK

Walkable Communities

58%

Of Minnesotans agree that not being able to walk to school or work is an obstacle to healthier living. Walking is an easy and accessible way to be active, and regular physical activity reduces the risks of many chronic diseases.

THE ENDLESS BENEFITS OF WALKING

The benefits of a community designed for walking are many and diverse:



WALK FOR TRANSPORTATION

25% of all trips in the U.S. are 1 mile or less, and yet most of these trips are taken by car. Walking reduces traffic congestion and the cost of road maintenance.



WALK FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY

Improving neighborhoods and business districts by increasing walkability makes them places people want to visit, increasing foot traffic and investment in the community.



WALK FOR COMMUNITY

People out walking make towns **livelier, safer** and **more attractive** places to live, work, play, shop and invest.



WALK FOR SAVING MONEY

The average household cost to own and operate one car in the U.S. is **\$9,000 per year** – being able to walk to places makes it easier to live without a car and take advantage other forms of transportation.



WALK FOR SOCIAL EQUITY

Walking can easily be made accessible to people of all incomes, races, ages and levels of ability. Many people of varying abilities benefit from good walking facilities, whether walking or rolling.



WALK FOR IMPROVED STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Physically active kids tend to have better academic achievement and fewer disciplinary problems.



REAL STORIES OF MINNESOTANS PULLING TOGETHER

Several communities in Minnesota are seeing the value of creating safe and pleasant places to walk. Communities like Alexandria, Minnesota, are implementing Complete Streets policies in their new road construction projects. In downtown Alexandria, the redesigned main street connects downtown to nearby regional trails. Broadway Street is safer for people walking, people in cars and trucks, and people on bikes.

STEPS FOR ACTION

How can you make it better to walk in your community? Where do you start? Here are a few ideas adapted from the national organization, *Everybody Walk!*



✔ SPEAK UP FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

It's important that national, state and local investments in transportation improve walking, bicycling, public transit and other forms of active transportation. Learn about the Minnesota state pedestrian plan: www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/plan/index.html

✔ SUPPORT COMPLETE STREETS

Support state, regional and local Complete Streets policies, which provide for "routine accommodation" of people walking and biking on roadways. These policies help create sidewalks, better crossings, lighting and other critical safety features.

✔ REDUCE TRAFFIC SPEED

Be conscious of your own driving habits and support lower speed limits and other safe driving measures. Traffic calming devices, especially around schools, town centers, business districts and workplaces all protect people on foot.

✔ PROMOTE SAFE ROUTES

Launch a Safe Routes to School program in your community—so kids, teachers, and staff can walk to and from school. Visit the Minnesota Safe Routes to School Resource Center at mnsaferoutestoschool.com.

✔ ENCOURAGE WALKING AT WORK

Start a trend by introducing walking meetings at your job. Suggest that employers create incentives to reward people who commute by foot, bike and public transit.

✔ WALK YOUR TALK

Help stage public events and meet ups—such as a stroll with the mayor or an Open Streets event—which emphasize the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of walking.

✔ IMPROVE MAPS AND SIGNAGE

Post signs showing how close it is to get to destinations on foot, and create easy-to-use walking maps for your town and region. Find the Minneapolis Walking Routes for Youth Map at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/publicworks/saferoutes/WCMS1P-084549.

✔ MAKE THE STREETS SAFER

Organize community groups to walk the streets, working with law enforcement and media to ensure that walking is, and is perceived as, a safe and enjoyable option.

Resources:

www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/plan/pdf/MNWalks_ES.pdf

www.everybodywalk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Walkability.Final_2.pdf

www.activelivingresearch.org/active-education-physical-education-physical-activity-and-academic-performance