

INTERVENTION

Active Transportation Funding Policy

Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)



DISSEMINATION CATEGORY

The Nashville MPO Active Transportation Funding Policy is an emerging intervention based on its use of evidence-based strategies. Developed in practice, it shows promise but evidence in support of effectiveness is not yet available.

OVERVIEW

Intent of the intervention

The intent of the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Active Transportation Funding Policy is to change the built environment to make active transportation easier and safer to use. The Active Transportation Funding Policy includes two key elements: (1) dedicated funding for active transportation infrastructure and education about active transportation and (2) the application of scoring criteria that incorporates active transportation indicators. Because of these environmental changes, it will be safer and more convenient for people to walk, bike or take transit.

The Active Transportation Funding Policy has potential to impact both the individual level of the socio-ecological model, through education and awareness activities conducted as part of the development of the policy, and the community environment by affecting physical activity behavior through the increased use of active transportation across the population.

Public health, transportation planning, and land use decisions

Research shows that transportation planning and policy can have a significant impact on public health. Transportation and health are linked in myriad ways. The availability of transportation options can connect people to essential services and goods, such as grocery stores and farmers' markets, banking, and jobs. Different transportation options – biking and walking, mass transit, private vehicle – impact pollution and the air we breathe. Furthermore, transportation planning and land use patterns are inextricably linked.

Transportation is also linked to land use. Towns, cities and counties make decisions about separating or integrating different land uses – residential, commercial, workplaces – which affects peoples' decisions about how to get from one place to another. When residential, commercial and workplaces are within walking or biking distance from each other, land use decisions facilitate active transportation. When residential areas are very far from commercial areas and workplaces, land use decisions are a barrier to active transportation. Sidewalks and bike lanes, therefore, are better used when they go to a destination, which is more likely to occur when multiple land uses are in close proximity.

Public health practitioners and transportation planners can become more integrated in practice by developing strategic partnerships. To that end, this template serves several purposes:

- Provides public health practitioners insight into the process an MPO may follow to increase infrastructure for biking, walking, and mass transit;

- Highlights “points of entry” for public health practitioners in the transportation planning process; and
- Provides one specific approach to integrating health (specifically, physical activity through active transportation) into transportation planning, which could serve as one example for public health practitioners to share with other transportation planning organizations.

Working with an MPO

MPOs across the US work with local governments to establish the transportation priorities. Since public health is part of local government, public health can – and should - have a seat at the table when conversations about transportation priorities occur. Some MPOs have to do things like monitor air quality, but have little understanding of how air quality affects asthma, heart disease and diabetes, or that being in a car for long daily commutes and errands restricts opportunities for physical activity. Public health can really help to paint the ‘rest of the story’ for transportation professionals, especially since public health (departments, non-profits, etc.) collects so much data on health behaviors and outcomes. Much of the data collected by the public health and health sectors would be very useful for transportation planners, such as where people live who have high rates of chronic disease, among other data.

Description of Policy

The Nashville MPO has developed an innovative strategy to increase funding for active transportation projects.

First, the MPO developed scoring criteria (called Project Evaluation Criteria) that favor projects supporting active transportation and public transit and that mitigate environmental effects. These criteria are applied to 70% of Urban Surface Transportation Program funds (U-STP) — the biggest source of funding the MPO receives (see Intervention Materials for Project Evaluation criteria).

Second, the MPO began targeting more of the U-STP money toward bicycle and pedestrian projects. While U-STP money has traditionally been used for roads/highways, these funds can also be used for multi-modal transportation *and* education/outreach. The new funding policy:

- Immediately dedicates 15% of STP funding to active transportation infrastructure and education/awareness activities;
 - In the next 25 years, this dedicated funding, called the *Active Transportation Program*, expected to provide approximately \$115 million for active transportation infrastructure. There is no other reserved federal funding for active transportation. On average across the US, about 1.5% of federal funding is used for active transportation projects, and dedicating 15% to active transportation is practically unheard of. *This policy is aggressive and innovative, taking funding for active transportation to new levels.*
- “Flexes” an additional 10% of the U-STP funding to public transit improvements/efforts.
 - The MPO considers public transit “the backbone” of an active transportation system since transit users often incorporate walking or biking into their use of transit. Transit is mostly funded through the Federal Transit Administration, but this 10% of U-STP funding supplements other sources of public transit funding.
- Dedicates another 5% of the U-STP funding to technology improvements (such as pedestrian countdown signals or signs encouraging biking or walking on bad air quality days).

Combined, 30% of U-STP funding is dedicated to active transportation related infrastructure and scoring criteria favoring projects good for health and the environment are applied to the other 70% of U-STP funding. Through these two approaches, the MPO formally integrates health into transportation decision-making.

Allocative in nature, this policy focuses on the distribution of funding to particular kinds of transportation projects. By virtue of its structure and mandate, the MPO is not responsible for coordinating the construction of the projects, but rather it facilitates the project proposal process and selects projects for funding. Once projects are funded by the MPO, the State Department of Transportation and the funded local jurisdictions coordinate construction.

The targeted outcomes for the Active Transportation Funding Policy are:

- Increased infrastructure for walking (e.g., sidewalks and greenways)
- Increased infrastructure for biking (e.g., bike lanes and greenways)
- Increased transportation options for all users (especially zero-car households)
- Increased use of active transportation (biking, walking, and transit)

Intended Population

The Active Transportation Funding Policy intends to reach all residents of middle Tennessee who use transportation infrastructure, and particularly those who already use or will/would use active transportation infrastructure (mass transit, bike lanes/greenways, and sidewalks). In areas where the implications for health equity are greatest, the MPO attempts to provide expanded transportation options.

Setting(s)

This policy intervention would be implemented in community settings and transportation planning organizations (such as MPOs, Councils of Governments (COGs), or Associations of Governments).

This policy is implemented in community settings by way of transportation planning organizations and through partnership with multidisciplinary stakeholders, such as those from environmental/conservation organizations, public health organizations, and other transportation/transit-focused organizations. The physical environment in communities is the target of the Nashville Area MPO's policy intervention. While the policy must be adopted by a transportation planning organization and not by a legislative body, it is a public policy insofar as transportation policy guides how the MPO spends transportation dollars and affects the entire population of the Nashville metro area.

Background and responsibilities for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for coordinating with local government on regional transportation priorities. MPOs help local government to establish transportation priorities, but MPOs are *not* local government entities. MPOs, established in the 1960s, receive federal funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) through about 100 different streams, into the state DOT. The State DOT allocates some money to the various MPOs within the state; MPOs also apply to the State DOT for some of their funding. As stated elsewhere, the largest funding source is the Urban Surface Transportation Program (U-STP). There are 11 MPOs in Tennessee and about 385 nationwide. MPOs are mandated to do both long- and short-term transportation planning.

Every 5 years, MPOs must complete a long range plan (in this case known as the Regional Transportation Plan or RTP); the Nashville Area MPO's RTP is the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. A shorter term transportation plan – the Transportation Improvement Program – has a four-year time horizon, and is the short-term programming and funding tool for the longer term Regional Transportation Plan projects. A significant number of the projects outlined in both the short- and long-term plans are funded through the U-STP.

It is important to note that MPOs have tremendous power and authority in transportation planning. As a recent report released by TransForm (a California-based transportation focused organization) points out, “These [regional transportation plans] plans don’t just sit on a shelf; they are tied to billions of dollars in state and federal transportation funds.”¹ MPOs and their partners decide how this money is used to fund transportation projects. *Given their decision-making authority and technical know-how, MPOs are an extraordinary partner for public health practitioners seeking to increase infrastructure for and use of active transportation.*

Other organizations that serve the same function as an MPO are: Councils of Government (COGs), Regional Councils, Associations of Governments and Transportation Planning Organizations. In rural areas, Rural Planning Organizations work with local governments in small cities and towns, although in many states these RPOs do not budget funding like MPOs, but only submit project requests to a state DOT for consideration for state-controlled transportation funds.

Length of time in the field

The Nashville Area MPO's Active Transportation Funding Policy and the scoring criteria were adopted in December 2010. All of the projects for the first round of the Active Transportation Program have to be completed before the fall of 2014.

HEALTH EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides demographic information about the population reached by the policy/intervention, including age, gender, race/ ethnicity, socioeconomic status, urban/ rural.

Approximately 1.5 million people reside in the 5+ county area covering 2,800 square miles for which the MPO does transportation planning. The population is racially diverse (African American, White, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander).The region includes urban, suburban and rural areas and has residents of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic levels.

	MPO Region (Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson, Maury (part), and Robertson (part))	
	Number	Percentage
White	1,025,337	74.3%
Black	236,608	17.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4,400	.3%
Asian	35,735	2.6%

¹ TransForm. *Creating Healthy Regional Transportation Plans: A Primer for California's Public Health Community on Regional Transportation Plans and Sustainable Communities Strategies*, 2012.

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	809	.1%
Some other race	48,179	3.5%
Two or more races	29,784	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	99,812	7.2%
TOTAL	1,380,852	

IMPLEMENTATION

Main Components of Active Transportation Funding Policy

Note: These components play a role in most or all of the MPO’s bike/pedestrian activities. The approaches below help the NMPO incorporate health into transportation planning; get adequate public involvement; and formulate policy based on public opinion.

- Educate stakeholders about the importance of connecting health and transportation in a transportation plan.** Because many people still have limited knowledge about the connection between transportation and health, it is important to educate key stakeholders about how transportation impacts health and how transportation planners can be part of the solution. This can occur through workshops, trainings, or public input sessions.
- Conduct thorough formative work that incorporates public input.** The MPO used a variety of approaches, including surveys and in-person meetings, to collect feedback from the public. The MPO collected qualitative feedback from the public about barriers and opportunities to walking and bicycling in the region, as well as on models the MPO developed to rate roadways about how well they served the safety and comfort of bicyclists and pedestrians and a model that predicted areas of the region that were more likely than others to have bicycle and pedestrian trips. The public was also invited to create the criteria for scoring bicycle and pedestrian projects. The criteria developed through this process included seeing if a new facility connected to an existing or planned facility, whether or not the facility was in a locally adopted bicycle and pedestrian plan, and whether the facility would help to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians and help to decrease traffic congestion.
- Work with multidisciplinary stakeholders/partners.** Multidisciplinary collaboration provides perspectives from other sectors; can help promote your cause and your message more broadly than if you were working alone; and can provide feedback you may not otherwise receive on proposed policies. The MPO works with partners in health, housing, transportation, transit advocacy, and other sectors.
- Adopt a policy to support the vision expressed by the public, including the creation and application of objective scoring criteria that reflect public input.** The Nashville Area MPO created rigorous scoring criteria that allocated more points for a project that addressed health and environmental concerns, among others. See Intervention Materials for the Project Evaluation Criteria.
- Allocate funding to support the policy and the vision** (see bullet above), such as devoting a certain percentage of a funding source to a specific project. As stated elsewhere, the Nashville MPO has allocated 15% of STP funding to active transportation infrastructure and education/awareness activities; flexes” an additional 10% of the U-STP funding to public transit improvements/efforts; and dedicates another 5% of the U-

STP funding to technology improvements (such as pedestrian countdown signals or signs encouraging biking or walking on bad air quality days).

- **Establish a way to measure progress over time.** A key piece of the MPO's work involves monitoring activities over time. For example, the MPO will benchmark progress over time by monitoring: the number of active transportation policies (such as complete streets policies) that are adopted; how many plans consider active transportation and health (including zoning codes, comprehensive plans, subdivision regulations and major street plans); how many miles of various facilities (such as greenways, sidewalks, and bike lanes) are built; congestion and air quality; all types of crashes; the number of people using active transportation; and transit ridership. Assessing this data over time will allow the MPO to see if their efforts around active transportation are making a difference. Finally, the Regional Transportation and Health study (data for this study is being collected in 2012) will provide a longitudinal perspective of the impact of the MPO's policies over the next few decades.

Advocacy for and Enactment of the Active Transportation Funding Policy

The process of developing, advocating for and enacting the new Active Transportation Funding Policy was multi-pronged. Steps leading up to the adoption of the policy included: conducting surveys/studies, receiving public input (written and oral), and reviewing work of other MPOs/transportation planning organizations to learn about best practices already in the field.

The MPO's formative work focused on learning what kinds of transportation infrastructure citizens of Middle Tennessee wanted. Once public input was collected, MPO staff used the data to develop the scoring criteria, which integrated health and the environment, and the 15% reserved funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and education/awareness activities. Several key elements of the MPO's formative work are described below.

- **The 2010 Regional Transportation Study**, a random digit-dialed survey with approximately 1,100 households that responded;
- **Survey of Bike and Pedestrian Behaviors and Perceptions**, an online survey sent to participants from public meetings, as well as bike advocacy groups, non-profits focused on greenways, and other partners. (Recipients were asked to forward the URL to coworkers, friends, and family who walked/biked on a regular basis as well as those who did not walk/bike regularly.) The survey was also sent to member jurisdictions. In total, approximately 1700 responded
- **Bike and Pedestrian Crash Survey**, sent to everyone who completed the Survey of Bike and Pedestrian Behaviors and Perceptions, focused on those having experienced a crash/accident as a cyclist or a pedestrian. Over 1000 people responded.
- **Regional Transportation Plan Survey**, a comprehensive survey to gather input on the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. The survey focused on quality of life, transit, and other growth issues; it was posted on the MPO's website. Between 100 and 200 people completed this survey.

Additionally, MPO staff played a key role in framing the relevant issues around active transportation to the Executive Committee of the MPO (made up of mayors of member jurisdictions). The MPO staff framed economic prosperity and the components of a livable and sustainable community. By talking about the influence of mass transit and employee healthcare costs on company relocation decisions, the MPO illustrated to stakeholders that having transportation choices is good for congestion, for the local economy, and for the health of the workforce and general population.

Implementation of Policy

The Nashville Area MPO has developed and implemented three distinct scoring processes, which all play a role in how the MPO is supporting health through transportation planning.

Application of Bicycle and Pedestrian Study Scoring Criteria: Criteria for scoring and prioritizing bike and pedestrian projects were first developed as part of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study conducted in 2009. The criteria used to score potential projects includes:

- determining the level of service and potential number of non-motorized trips with the goal of providing better facilities and increasing facilities in places that are not conducive to biking and walking – this step produces a score of up to 24 points (a higher score indicates higher need for the infrastructure improvement and a higher likelihood of use, due to population density);
- determining the project's contribution to bike/pedestrian network connectivity, such as linking and/or extending a bicycle or sidewalk facility to another segment;
- analyzing how the project would improve the safety of biking/walking in the area;
- measuring the impact of the project on congestion mitigation;
- showing how the project supports community goals (elements of locally adopted plans that include bicycle/pedestrian recommendations); and
- evaluating the project's contribution to high health impact areas (areas that are considered high health risk areas) within the NMPO.

More information on this first phase of scoring criteria can be found here:

http://www.nashvillempo.org/docs/bikeped/Tech_Memo_4_final_113009.pdf

Application of Project Evaluation Criteria to projects submitted for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan: The Project Evaluation criteria used to score and rank submissions for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan grew out of the scoring criteria described above that was created as part of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study.

- The first step is for the MPO to issue a call-for-projects.
- Once the call for projects is out, jurisdictions can submit project requests for anything from new transit service, an Interstate interchange, a road-widening, retiming traffic signals, a greenway, or pretty much any improvement to a roadway designated as part of the federal aid highway system (with some limited exceptions). The Nashville MPO requires that the projects must be included in a locally-adopted comprehensive plan or major street plan to demonstrate that technical analysis and community input have determined that the project is significant to that community. Also, a local jurisdiction must demonstrate that it will be able to providing matching funds should its project be included in the plan. Depending on the project type and funding source the match required ranges from 10-50% of the project cost (usually it is 20%). Projects are submitted using the Project Submission form available in the Intervention Materials section of this template.
- Jurisdictions submitting project proposals must provide an explanation for why the jurisdiction believes that a project is regionally significant. For the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, over 500 project applications were submitted for the plan, with a little over 400 applications for roadway improvements.
- It is in this step that the Project Evaluation Criteria is applied to each project submission the MPO received. The MPO conducts a comprehensive analysis of each project accounting for everything from roadway congestion, air quality, freight traffic, Environmental Justice populations, non-motorized/active transportation, health and a

variety of other factors (see attached scoring sheet, which reflects the Project Evaluation Criteria included in the Intervention Materials).

- Following the comprehensive analysis, each technical staff person conducts an additional review of each project application for impact on congestion, transit, freight and the bicycle/pedestrian network.
 - For the bicycle and pedestrian review, a roadway was analyzed for overall importance to the bicycle and pedestrian network, proximity to community destinations such as schools, parks and grocery stores, and additional analysis that reviewed qualitatively how integral an active transportation component would be to the mobility, accessibility and quality of life of the residents and the users of the roadway. This analysis factored into the final decision-making process and scoring for the project, and helped to de-emphasize the traditional notion that a roadway function is to serve automotive trips quickly and efficiently, but shifting the paradigm so that a roadway is considered as an essential part of a community by connecting people to housing, jobs, other modes of transportation, food and other destinations.
- Out of the several rounds of scoring and analysis described above, projects are selected for inclusion in the RTP.

Application of Scoring Criteria for the Active Transportation Program: The Active Transportation Program is the 15% of the U-STP funding to be devoted to bicycle and pedestrian projects, including education and awareness activities.

- The first step is for the MPO to release the Call for Projects (example provided in Intervention Materials section) notifying jurisdictions about the funding and how to apply.
- Local jurisdictions submit project proposals.
- Once project proposals are submitted, the project scoring process includes these steps:
 - Step 1: Quantitative Scoring by MPO Staff – MPO staff will apply the Project Evaluation Criteria used during the development of the 2035 Plan which includes an analysis of LOS, latent demand, proximity of population and employment, traffic volumes, congestion, environmental features, Title VI populations, etc. Projects will be scored and sorted into three tiers (high, medium, and low). MPO Staff and the BPAC will review the applications jointly and decide which applications will move onto the second round of evaluation.
 - Step 2: Qualitative Assessment by BPAC – The BPAC will perform a qualitative evaluation of each project, scoring applications from 0 (worst) to 5 (best) within the four factor areas assigned to each category of projects. For *Infrastructure Projects*, the areas are: Promotion of Environmental & Personal Health, Expected Utility/ Usage, Contribution to the Built Environment, Value over No Build/ No Action. For *Non-Infrastructure Projects*, the areas are: Scope of Audience/ Reach, Consistency of Message to Regional Goals, Synergy with other Programs, and Sustainability of Effort. Projects will then be scored and sorted into three tiers (high, medium, and low). MPO Staff and the BPAC will jointly review projects in the lowest tier and decide which should continue into the third round of evaluation.
 - Step 3: Qualitative Assessment by MPO Staff – MPO staff will finalize the rankings for projects, considering fiscal years 2011-2015 Transportation Improvement Program budget constraints, the performance history of project sponsors, long-term sustainability of the project such as ongoing operations and maintenance, and consistency with the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.

- Once all scoring is completed, project selection will occur in three stages and involve the participation of MPO staff, MPO BPAC, MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), and MPO Executive Board:
 - With the MPO BPAC serving in an advisory role, MPO staff will make recommendations for project awards to the TCC and MPO Executive Board.
 - The MPO TCC will be requested to endorse MPO staff recommendations for consideration by the MPO Executive Board.
 - The MPO Executive Board will be asked to adopt MPO staff recommendations
- Upon adoption by the MPO Executive Board, letters will be mailed to award recipients with instructions on how to move forward with the contracting process.
- If funded, construction on the project begins. This phase of the implementation is managed by the State Dept. of Transportation.

Keys to Success

- Including multidisciplinary partners helps to inform transportation planning processes. Potential partners include (but are not limited to): local and state health organizations, other government agencies such as schools, parks, police, public works and others whose work is impacted by the built environment and health; non-profits such as the YMCA, bike and pedestrian advocacy groups; and others who share a common vision.
- Coordinating and collaborating with Chambers of Commerce and Smart Growth groups helps to engage the business community and bridge the argument between economic prosperity and transportation.
- The existence of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee within the MPO provides support from within for environmental and policy changes that promote walking and biking.
- Dynamic and forward-thinking leadership within the MPO.

Barriers to Implementation

- Knowledge and awareness of the following issues among the public and policymakers:
 - Lack of understanding of the connection between transportation and health, not only in the general public but also among various key players in transportation planning and in public health.
 - The understanding between healthcare spending for disease treatment vs. prevention, and how the enormous spending on healthcare is taking away funding for other areas such as transportation.
 - General lack of understanding about how an unhealthy workforce decreases productivity and increases healthcare spending, and why companies are starting to pay attention to things like transportation and healthcare costs when they are looking to relocate.
 - The still-new idea that health needs to be addressed outside of the medical setting, as well. This is starting to change, but people are just beginning to see that policies contribute to or undermine health, and/or why they should advocate for good policy.
- Federal transportation funding and decisions that trickle down to the MPO level.
- Changing the culture/social norms around modes of transportation.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Because an MPO has a federal mandate to conduct transportation planning, its funding sources are integrated with that mandate. The estimated funding for the MPO is approximately \$6 billion over the next 25 years.

Staff

Many of the changes, such as including language about physical activity in a plan, can be done with minimal staff. The leadership of the Nashville Area MPO's director was instrumental in making the changes the organization made; the Director of Healthy Communities managed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, which supported the changes in MPO policies. The preparation and update to the Regional Transportation Plan took approximately two years – big changes can take a long time to develop and implement. All staff members were involved in the Regional Transportation Planning process. The Director of Healthy Communities scored the bike/pedestrian projects; it took approximately 4 months of full-time work to score 500 projects. Approximately six months before the adoption of the RTP, all staff devoted nearly 100% of their time to working on the plan. One hundred percent of the Director of Healthy Communities' time is devoted to bicycle, pedestrian and health policy; stakeholder coordination; and funding, programs, education and encouragement for active transportation.

Training

MPO staff were trained to incorporate physical activity considerations into their transportation planning work on-the-job and through participating in conferences, reading recent research, and participating in low-cost professional development (e.g., webinars). Much of this “training” was focused on keeping abreast of the latest work in the area of active transportation. Staff trained the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee members.

Materials

Many of the “materials” the MPO created to support implementation - such as holding public meetings and conversations and creating and disseminating online surveys - were done with little cost other than staff time. The entire bicycle and pedestrian study cost \$250,000* – this provided much of the quantitative data and support for the MPO's new work supporting active transportation. **MPOs receive money for staff and studies, but an MPO decides how it spends that money – and many have chosen to not spend it on activities that incorporate health.

Funding

The MPO devoted \$2.5 million to the Active Transportation Program (15% of U-STP) in this round of funding. The source of the funding was a federal transportation program called the Urban Surface Transportation Program.

UNDERLYING THEORY/ EVIDENCE

The Nashville Active Transportation Funding Policy is an emerging intervention and evidence in support of effectiveness is not yet available.

Strategies Used²: The Nashville MPO uses the following evidence-based strategies for physical activity:

² A full description of the intervention strategies used can be found on the Center TRT website with references to the sources of evidence to support the strategies.

- **Active transportation** is supported by funding infrastructure for biking and walking biking and walking, as well as through funding education and awareness activities, such as Safe Routes to Shopping and bicycle safety/education projects;
- **Increasing access to and the number of places for physical activity:** The MPO's Active Transportation Funding Policy provides new ways to get to places by biking or walking and new venues, such as greenways and bike lanes, for physical activity.
- **Urban design – policy and zoning to facilitate physical activity:** Use of this strategy is demonstrated by the MPO's efforts to change the built environment to make physical activity more appealing and accessible through designing roadways with all users in mind (e.g., complete streets), which is at the core of the MPO's efforts.

Evaluation Findings:

Formative evaluation: The Nashville MPO conducted a considerable amount of formative work to develop this policy. In order to gauge the extent to which policies like this (that is, incorporating health) existed within other planning organizations around the country, the Nashville Area MPO's Executive Director reviewed transportation plans and their components. Stakeholders, including citizens of the Nashville metro area, were highly engaged in this process. The MPO gathered public input through multiple surveys and both formal and informal studies, the results of which directly informed policy development. Information was collected through multiple methods and this added to the breath of formative work. The MPO analyzes various data sources related to underserved populations, which allows them to assess the areas of highest need based on Degrees of Disadvantage (census tracts with higher than average percentages of at least three subpopulations, including zero car households, households in poverty, female heads of household, etc.). Additionally, the policy is transdisciplinary based on the involvement of stakeholders from multiple sectors, including health, transportation, growth and development, and environmental protection. This transdisciplinary approach is imperative for transportation and land use policies.

Process evaluation: The most recent request for proposals for the 2035 RTP resulted in an increase of the number of proposals that included bike and pedestrian elements. For the 2035 RTP, there were approximately 500 projects submitted; about 420 of those were roadway projects (and therefore primarily covered with U-STP funds), and about 75% of those included a bike/pedestrian element (i.e., a bike lane or a sidewalk). In the adopted 2035 RTP, close to 70% of the roadway projects included a bike and/or pedestrian element. By MPO estimates, just 2% of projects included in the last RTP (put out in 2005) had a bike/pedestrian element. For the first round of the Active Transportation Program, ten projects were submitted (valued at \$3.8 million) and eight were funded (at \$2.5 million). The MPO tracks the number and content of the applications as part of process evaluation.

Outcome evaluation: Because projects have only recently been funded through this policy, outcomes of changes in the built environment cannot yet be determined. However, the logic of the MPO's approach suggests that environmental changes will be favorable and would lead to behavioral changes related to physical activity.

POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

Reach: Comprehensive transportation planning and infrastructure development has strong potential for broad reach, which in the Nashville metropolitan area includes nearly 1.5 million people. The NMPO specifically worked to increase its reach to populations and communities at

greatest risk by looking at multiple data sources and conducting in-depth formative work to identify areas at greatest risk and subsequently prioritized those areas in its planning process.

Effectiveness: Evidence of effectiveness of changing the targeted outcomes is emerging. The NMPO employs the several evidence-based strategies: active transportation, *increasing* access to and number of places for physical activity, and urban design/policy and zoning to facilitate physical activity. Data from the MPO suggests that the policy has been effective at promoting the inclusion of an active transportation component in funding proposals. In the most recent funding cycle for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, 75% of 420 roadway project proposals included an active transportation component. The policy has also been effective at increasing monetary resources for active transportation. In the first round of funding through the the Active Transportation Program, the MPO funded eight active transportation proposals (out of ten submissions). Although it is too soon to assess the effects on infrastructure and transportation behaviors, the NMPO has plans to measure those outcomes over time.

Adoption: The NMPO approach has been adopted by a single MPO. However, it has potential to be adopted in others.

Implementation: The NMPO has taken a careful approach to monitoring and ensuring implementation of the policy. They have developed a detailed and systematic approach to rating transportation proposals in a way that gives priority for the inclusion of active transport and for addressing transport issues in high disparity areas.

Maintenance: The policy includes a 25-year plan and is funded by several public streams of funding. The potential for long term maintenance is high. However, since funding is largely determined at the federal level, there is a risk that funding levels will fluctuate over time.

INTERVENTION MATERIALS

Materials for Download from the [Center TRT Website](#):

- Technical Memo #4 for Bicycle and Pedestrian Study (2009).
- Project Evaluation Criteria – The Project Evaluation Criteria was applied to project proposals submitted for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.
- Scoring sheets used for the Active Transportation Program (ATP) to score both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects – These are the sheets used to score and rank the project proposals submitted to the Active Transportation Program (15% of STP funding for active transportation infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects).
- Questions included in the following surveys – These survey questions are the ones the Nashville MPO used in its formative work, described above:
 - Survey 1 - Survey of Bike and Pedestrian Behaviors and Perceptions
 - Survey 2 - Bike and Pedestrian Crash Survey
 - Survey 3 - Regional Transportation Plan Survey

EVALUATION MATERIALS

For new adopters wishing to evaluate an Active Transportation Funding Policy such as the one the Nashville Area MPO developed, Center TRT has developed an evaluation logic model and an evaluation plan. These materials can be downloaded from the Evaluation Materials section of the [Center TRT website](#) within this template.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Related Web Links

Nashville MPO website: <http://www.nashvillempo.org/>

Specific sections of MPO's website that may be useful:

- Plans and Programs: http://www.nashvillempo.org/plans_programs/rtp/
- Regional Planning: http://www.nashvillempo.org/regional_plan/
 - Focus on walking & biking: http://www.nashvillempo.org/regional_plan/walk_bike/
- Publications and Documents: http://www.nashvillempo.org/publications_docs/
- Transportation and Health and Well Being: http://www.nashvillempo.org/regional_plan/health/
- Active Transportation Program:
http://www.nashvillempo.org/plans_programs/tip/ATP.aspx

Other resources related to the MPO's transportation policies

Webinar: Leslie Meehan presented about the MPO's work on active transportation in a webinar produced by the American Public Health Association (APHA) called *Community Health and Transportation Planning*. The webinar can be found here:

<http://www.apha.org/advocacy/priorities/issues/transportation/Webinars.htm>

National Prevention Plan: The MPO's policies are also included in the National Prevention Plan that was developed by 17 Federal agencies. See p.10 of the PDF available here:

<http://www.healthcare.gov/prevention/nphpphc/strategy/report.pdf>.

Nashville Public Television documentary: The MPO was featured in a documentary made by Nashville Public Television (in the *Obesity* segment), available here:

<http://www.wnpt.org/productions/chcv2/about/>

Weight of the Nation Documentary: Nashville was featured in a segment of the *Weight of the Nation* documentary series about the obesity epidemic in the US. This segment is not explicitly about the Nashville Area MPO, but highlights the context the MPO works within and provides a good example of multiple efforts occurring in one city to turn the tide. The segment about Nashville can be found here: <http://theweightofthenation.hbo.com/films/bonus-shorts/nashville-takes-action-a-city-battles-obesity>.

Training/Technical Assistance available

Contact Leslie Meehan at the MPO (information below) to discuss technical assistance options.

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