

SAFE ROUTES TO HEALTH

Engaging Healthcare Institutions in Active Transportation

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Safe Routes to Health is a Seattle Neighborhood Greenways initiative that partners with Seattle-area healthcare providers to envision and realize a city where every hospital and health clinic can comfortably be reached by walking, biking, wheelchair, and transit. Most large healthcare institutions, like other Seattle employers, already engage in Commute Trip Reduction programs that offer incentives for employees to bike, walk and use transit to travel to work. Safe Routes to Health invites healthcare institutions to reframe these efforts as Active Transportation Promotion, and broaden their scope to include healthcare consumers, visitors, and the broader community.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase the mode share of people walking, biking and taking transit to healthcare facilities.
2. Encourage healthcare institutions to promote active transportation as a fundamental component of a healthy lifestyle.
3. Formalize partnerships between healthcare institutions and Seattle Neighborhood Greenways to advocate for and create safe, welcoming streets and neighborhoods that make it easy and convenient for people of all ages to get out and walk, ride bikes, travel by wheelchair, and use public transit.
4. Work with healthcare institution partners to develop a checklist of best practices for healthcare providers to encourage and support active transportation.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The health benefits of active transportation, including bicycling (1), walking (2) and using public transit (3) are well documented, as are the health risks of car dependence (4). We identify best practices that healthcare providers can use to encourage patients and visitors to safely and comfortably choose active forms of transportation in seeking healthcare and in daily life.

Our vision incorporates active transportation as a fundamental element of health promotion, equal in importance to preventive care clinic visits.

SAFE ROUTES TO HEALTH ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Identify key individuals within each healthcare institution committed to promoting active transportation.

Activity 2: Collect baseline data about transportation use by patients and visitors. Transportation planning focuses on reducing single-occupancy commute trips by employees, but rarely addresses transportation use by patients and visitors.

The National Household Transportation Survey samples US

This data suggests that many patients and visitors to healthcare institutions in Seattle, like other people who travel around the city, make use of active transportation. Through Safe Routes to Health, we will work with hospitals and clinics to develop data collection methodology suitable to the unique needs of healthcare institutions. This will allow institutions to establish baselines of active transportation use, develop plans to encourage active transportation, and track progress over time.

Activity 3: Develop signage, web pages, bulletin boards, maps and brochures that support and encourage active transportation. Hospitals and clinics routinely provide transportation information for patients and visitors using signage, web pages, bulletin boards, maps and brochures. This information often is helpful only for those who arrive by car. Minor changes can make these information sources helpful for people using active transportation as well. For example, links to a transit trip planner and an on-line bicycle map can be added to a website. Facility maps that show the location of car parking can be edited to include bike parking, transit stops, and walking routes. Signs at the entrance to parking garages can include a logo for bicycle parking.



Figure 2. Signage example at Children's Hospital



Figure 3. UW School of Public Health Website

Activity 4: Make biking and walking easy, convenient, and visible to patients, visitors and the general public. Position bike racks near entrances with signs indicating location of additional parking and parking designated for patients and visitors

Activity 5: Promote active transportation as the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. For example incorporate active transportation in activities encouraging active lifestyle. Below is an example of Group Health Walk and Talk program.



Figure 4. Designated Bike Parking at Virginia Mason

Activity 6: Engage with the community to create safe, livable streets for people of all ages and abilities. Improve safety and comfort at intersections for people walking, using wheelchairs or riding bicycles, calm traffic, build bicycle infrastructure, add amenities for walkers; develop Greenways, make bus stops easy to reach, comfortable and attractive.

Activity 7: Design active transportation into every aspect of the Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP). Seattle requires major institutions, including hospitals, to submit a Major Institution Master Plan for city approval before undertaking major expansions. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan incorporated in Seattle Children's recent MIMP has an overall goal of "supporting increased physical activity for employees, families and children which aligns with the hospital's core mission to combat childhood illness and improve public health."



Figure 5. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities at Children's



Figure 6. Designated Bike Parking at Virginia Mason



Figure 7. Group Health Walk and Talk

Activity 8: Support initiatives at the city, county, state and national level to promote active transportation.

NEXT STEPS

- Work with partners to collect data on transportation use by healthcare consumers and visitors. This will serve as a baseline for evaluating effectiveness of Safe Routes to Health activities.
- Develop and distribute checklist of activities for promoting Safe Routes to Health
- With partner institutions and academics, research the effectiveness of Safe Routes to Health actions in increasing use of active transportation and improving individual and community health

CURRENT PARTNERS

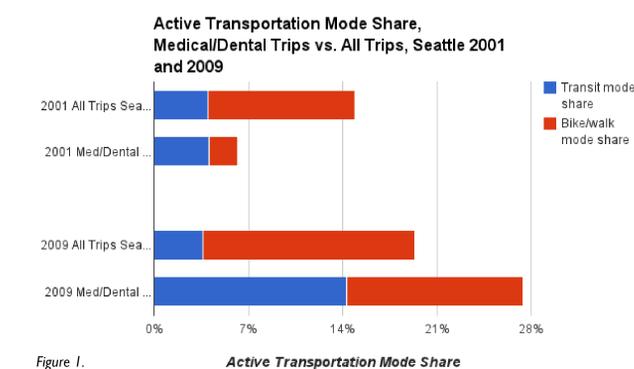
Children's Hospital: Paulo Nunez-Ueno, Director, Transportation and Sustainability
 Swedish Medical Center: Rayburn Lewis, MD, Senior VP, COO, Cherry Hill Campus; Sherry Williams, Community Affairs Director; Karen Lee Kimber, Transportation Services Coordinator
 University of Washington Department of Public Health: Dr. Howard Frumkin, Dean

Other potential partners in Seattle:

UW Medical Center
 Harborview Medical Center
 Virginia Mason Medical Center
 Group Health Cooperative
 Northwest Hospital
 UW Built Environment
 UW School of Nursing
 Seattle-King County Public Health
 Senior Services of Seattle King County

References

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households every few years regarding transportation use, including mode of transportation and purpose of daily trips. Between 2001 and 2009, use of active transportation modes (transit, walking and biking) increased for all trips both nationally and in the Seattle Metropolitan Service Area; but for medical or dental trips this increase has been most dramatic. In the Seattle metropolitan area in 2009, active transportation was used for over one fourth of all medical or dental trips.

