

Active Transportation Planning

Frequently Asked Questions



What is active transportation planning?

Active transportation plans (ATPs) are documents that provide a roadmap for improved walking and bicycling conditions. The planning process includes steps for gathering input and building community support, and lays the groundwork for funding and implementing a wide variety of projects, programs, and policies. Active transportation planning can take place at the regional, county, city, village, or neighborhood level. Plans may also address access to transit through active travel modes.

Active Transportation is human-powered transportation that engages people in healthy physical activity while they travel from place to place.

Ohio Department of Transportation Active Transportation Guide (2014)

Who might be involved in planning?

Active transportation planning is typically done by government agencies. Staff working on a plan may have administrative, enforcement, health, parks/recreation, planning/zoning, or transportation

Related Resources:

[Bicycle Infrastructure FAQ](#)
[Pedestrian Infrastructure FAQ](#)
[Complete Streets Policies FAQ](#)

specialties. At the public level, residents of all ages, races, genders, income levels, abilities, and interests should be involved. Community members such as business owners, developers, educators, housing managers, and tourism promoters may also participate in the planning process. Elected officials consider public needs and priorities during plan review and provide the final authority to adopt ATPs.



Members of an active transportation plan working group.

The 6 Es

Active transportation planning and design can be broken down into 5 Es: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Engineering. A sixth E, Equity, should also be prioritized throughout.

Engineering is the design and construction of improvements to the built environment.

Education is the array of programs that teach people of all ages how to walk and bike safely.

Encouragement programs get people excited about walking and biking, either by providing incentives for developing walking and biking habits or by creating the venue for walking and biking, like hosting a “fun run” or 5k race.

Enforcement programs help deter unsafe behaviors by people using all travel modes. Examples include Trail Ranger programs in which volunteers draw attention to inappropriate or unsafe activities on trails; or speed enforcement zones monitored by police to deter dangerous driving and share information about the rules of the road.

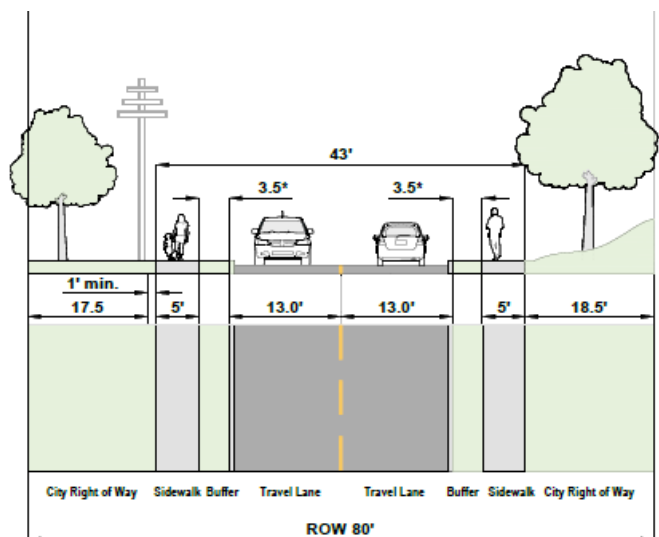
Evaluation programs include performance measures, such as pedestrian and bicyclist counts, miles of projects completed, community satisfaction surveys, and other activities that help communities track and celebrate progress around active transportation. One evaluation method is to conduct pedestrian and bicycle counts before and after a new piece of active transportation infrastructure is installed to measure its effect on local mobility and make the case for additional investments. Evaluation outcomes inform future plan revisions and updates, which may be made every 5 to 10 years.

Equity programs help improve access to safe walking and biking opportunities for underserved communities. Equity initiatives must make an intentional effort to include voices and perspectives that are often excluded from the planning discourse and prioritize low-income and communities of color when planning infrastructure investments.

What is included in a plan?

Plan content varies according to the needs of each community. Some common elements include:

- » A summary of the views of the community, often gathered through a public engagement process.
- » Descriptions of the benefits of walking and bicycling, such as improved connectivity, safety, health, economy, and environment.
- » Existing and proposed walkway and bikeway networks, with locations of sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and crosswalks.
- » Education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation program strategies (see sidebar).
- » Design concepts for specific or common types of streets in the community.
- » Guidelines and considerations for using design features such as curb extensions, warning beacons, green bike lanes, and bicycle stoplights.
- » Cost estimates and prioritized project segments for capital improvement programs and grant applications.
- » Equitable recommendations based upon factors like race, income, and car ownership.



Plans may include concept designs for proposed infrastructure.



The planning process should involve a variety of engagement techniques to connect with a broad audience.

What are the steps in active transportation planning?

Prepare for the process:

Start by reviewing examples of active transportation plans. Determine the government agency that will manage the planning effort, as well as a project manager. Estimate the number of hours the plan will take to create, based upon the desired elements. Determine the people who will complete the effort. If outside experts are needed, research typical planning fees. Identify funding and use the agency's standard procurement process to bring a consultant on board.

Engage with the public

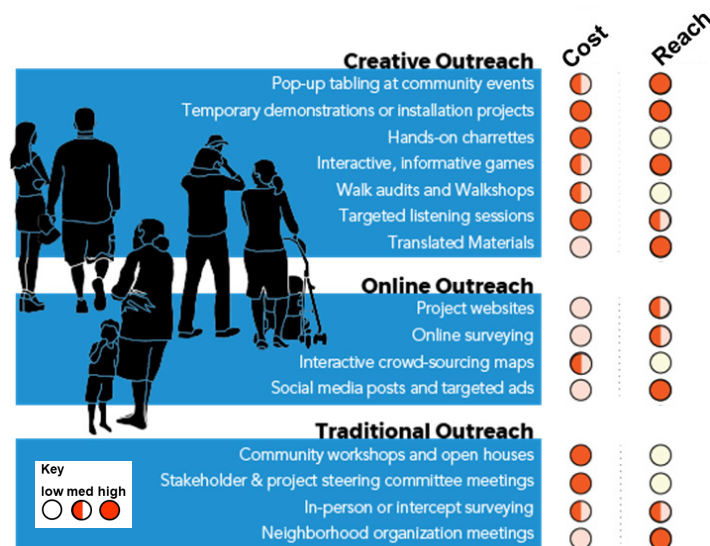
Establish an advisory committee to give input on the process. Carry out traditional (the public goes to the planners) and pop-up (the planners go to the public) workshops to kickoff the process. Employ online input tools to broaden the reach, such as mapping, visual preference, and open-ended formats. Get the word out by using simple, welcoming messages on websites, posters, emails, press releases, and social media platforms. Also spread the news through meetings, phone calls, and face-to-face conversations. Gather candid feedback through small group stakeholder discussions. Analyze and summarize the public's feedback in a published report.

Develop a vision and establish the facts

Using input from the public, develop a vision for the future. Create goals that achieve the vision. Use existing data to research the issues surrounding the goals; this may include analyzing crash locations, mapping popular destinations, or researching Census data for zero-car household density. As needed, conduct field work to establish the locations and features of existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Make recommendations

Using public input and the established fact base, develop a future walkway and bikeway network. Generate a list of projects that will create a fully connected system. Prioritize projects based on a set of criteria. Identify policy and programmatic changes that will achieve the community's vision. Create or update street, sidewalk, and trail guidelines to serve as a reference for designers. Identify responsible parties and likely funding sources. Invite the public to review the draft plan and then carry it forward to an elected body for adoption.



Costs vs. success in reaching underserved populations with community engagement techniques



What's happening in Ohio?

Communities of all sizes throughout Ohio have developed ATPs. Just a few examples are highlighted below.

Lorain Active Transportation Plan (2018)

The City of Lorain, Lorain County Public Health, Lorain City Schools, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency and Ohio Department of Transportation collaborated to create an active transportation plan for the city. The plan created a framework for a comprehensive, community-driven transportation network for all users, of all ages. The plan combines a Safe Routes to School approach with a larger community-wide focus on active transportation.

Lawrence County Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan (2018)

The Kentucky Ohio West Virginia (KYOVA) Interstate Planning Commission developed a bicycle and pedestrian master plan for Lawrence County in Southern Ohio. The plan evaluates and recommends active transportation connections throughout the County, including between rural areas and more urbanized communities, and to destinations in West Virginia and Kentucky. The proposed improvements would establish a comprehensive and interconnected active transportation network throughout the County. The plan included a project prioritization process that phases improvements over the next 15 years.



The City of Lorain's Active Transportation plan

Columbus Area Active Transportation Plan (2016)

Led by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, this regional-level plan was part of a larger transportation planning process for Columbus. It identifies 12 "Key Regional Corridors" classified into different segment types. It then recommends potential active transportation facilities that would be appropriate on each segment type. Finally, it provides an interactive map and cost estimator tool for the member communities to assist them with incorporating complete streets into their planning and development efforts.

Where can I find out more?

- » Federal Highway Safety Administration. (2016). *Pursuing Equity in Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning*. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/resources/equity_paper/
- » Initiative for Bicycle and Pedestrian Innovation. (2012). *Creating Walkable and Bikeable Communities – A user guide to developing pedestrian and bicycle master plans*. https://ppms.trec.pdx.edu/media/project_files/IBPI%20Master%20Plan%20Handbook%20FINAL.pdf
- » Ohio Department of Health Creating Healthy Communities. (2019). *Pedestrian Infrastructure FAQ*. <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/creating-healthy-communities/Active-Living/>
- » Ohio Department of Health Creating Healthy Communities. (2019). *Bicycle Infrastructure FAQ*. <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/creating-healthy-communities/Active-Living/>
- » Ohio Department of Transportation. (2014). *Active Transportation Guide: A Reference for Communities*. <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/SPR/bicycle/Documents/Final%20ODOT%20Active%20Transportation%20Plan%20Guide%2011-24-14.pdf>
- » Transportation Research Board. (2016). *ActiveTrans Priority Tool*. http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/topics/tools_apt.cfm

