



## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION, PARKS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

*One of the most efficient ways to build physical activity into a daily routine is to make the process of getting from Point A to Point B an active one, rather than passive. That means creating access to routes that are safe and convenient for walking, biking, jogging and more.*

### THE FACTS

- » In most communities, active transportation and parks are inherently linked with one another. That's because maintaining or expanding active transportation systems often relies on recreation and park agencies for initial infrastructure development, maintenance, promotional programs and marketing. As such, recreation and park programs are helping to create a culture shift toward increased active transportation.<sup>1</sup>
- » The American Lung Association found that increased active transportation can significantly reduce premature deaths, heart attacks, asthma attacks, chronic and acute bronchitis cases, respiratory-related emergency room visits, and lost work days, due to reduced pollution and physical activity benefits of smart growth development.<sup>2</sup>
- » A Corporate Wellness Study done by the City of San Jose's Department of Recreation found that people who walk a few times per week filed 14 percent fewer health care claims, spent 30 percent fewer days at a hospital facility, and had 40 percent fewer claims over the amount of \$5,000. <sup>3</sup> If people reduced automobile use by 1 percent and instead walked to nearby appointments or errands, they could lower obesity rates, saving tens of millions of dollars in medical expenses.<sup>4</sup>
- » People who live near trails are 50 percent more likely to get enough physical activity to help them stay healthy. People who live in walkable neighborhoods are twice as likely to get enough physical activity as people who don't.<sup>5</sup>



## THE FACTS

- » A 2005 study found that in Lincoln, Nebraska every \$1 spent on trails saved almost \$3 in direct medical costs over time.<sup>6</sup>
- » Residents living in areas with more active transportation had lower obesity rates than areas without a local culture or infrastructure that supports active transportation.<sup>7</sup>
- » Installing bike lanes increases the use of bicycling as a form of active transportation. When Portland, Oregon expanded their active transportation infrastructure to encourage cyclists, the next five years saw four times as many cyclists and a 69 percent decrease in accidents.<sup>8</sup> In New Orleans, a new bike lane increased cyclists by 225 percent.<sup>9</sup>

## SOURCES

- <sup>1</sup> NRPA. Active Transportation and Parks and Recreation.
- <sup>2</sup> American Lung Association. Healthy, Smart Growth Can Help California Save Lives and Billions of Dollars.
- <sup>3</sup> NPS. (1995). Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors. 4th edition revised.
- <sup>4</sup> Samimi, A., Mohammadian, A. & Madanizadeh, S. 2009. Effects of transportation and built environment on general health and obesity. *Transportation Research*, 14: 67-71.
- <sup>5</sup> Huston S, Evenson K, Bors P, et al. (2003). Neighborhood Environment, access to places for activity, and leisure-time physical activity in a diverse North Carolina population. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 18(1): 58-69.
- <sup>6</sup> Wang G, Macera CA, Scudder-Soucie B, et al. (2005). A cost-benefit analysis of physical activity using bike/pedestrian trails. *Health Promotion Practice*, 6(2). 174-179.
- <sup>7</sup> Pucher J, Buehler R, Bassett D, Dannenberg A. (2010). Walking and cycling to health: A comparative analysis of city, state and international data. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(10): 1986-1992.
- <sup>8</sup> Rails to Trails Conservancy. (2008). Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment for Bicycling and Walking.
- <sup>9</sup> Parker, K.M. et al. (2013). Effect of bike lane infrastructure improvements on ridership in one New Orleans neighborhood. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 45(1Suppl): S101-S107.

