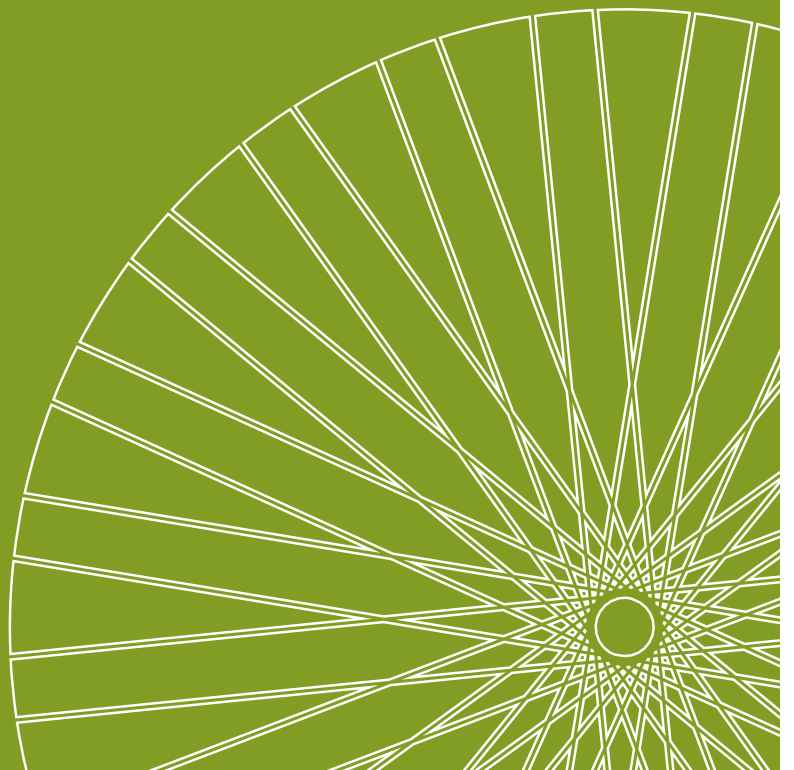


POLICY BRIEF

# Transforming Active Living Policy into Practice

## Municipal Best Practices



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## Municipal Best Practices

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## INTRODUCTION

Municipalities around the country are translating active living policy and plans into action. This brief provides examples of how municipalities have supported physical activity by tackling the following key barriers: lack of safety that prohibits people from using their built environment; lack of funding to translate active living policy into implementable projects; and a societal culture that promotes sedentary behavior.<sup>1</sup> The brief includes examples of municipal governments that have used innovative design strategies (e.g. crime prevention through design), financing strategies (e.g. through congestion pricing), as well as other inter-agency agreements (e.g. joint use agreements) to facilitate physical activity.

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<sup>1</sup>: Most information in this brief has been verified by involved municipal staff from the case example municipalities; in a few instances the information is based on reports published on the municipalities' websites.

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**BEST PRACTICES**

**Promoting Safety:  
Addressing Major Barriers to Youth Physical  
Activity**

Real and perceived threats from both crime and traffic greatly impact children's ability to be physically active outside of their home. If parents or their children perceive their neighborhood to be unsafe, children will be less likely to walk or bike to school or play outdoors. To promote physical activity among youth, it is important to ensure safety. The following are examples of cities that have made their neighborhoods safer for youth [23].

## Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Chula Vista, CA

Crime prevention through environmental design is a strategy to improve safety by making a place less attractive for criminal activity through built environment improvements. Adding street lighting or security cameras to a neighborhood increases the perception that people can be seen, and therefore, decreases the likelihood of crime. Maintaining properties by landscaping, removing litter and graffiti, and improving facades of vacant buildings also deters crime. Places which promote a sense of community pride and ownership, and create an environment which supports a bustling neighborhood at all hours are less likely to attract criminal activity [24].

In 2004, West Chula Vista, CA was chosen by Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) to improve “access to healthy food and physical activity in low-income communities to reduce childhood obesity” [25]. The West Chula Vista effort was a collaboration of five local youth, local health promoters, the City of Chula Vista Parks and Recreation Department, and a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) consultant. It was funded over a six-year period by the California Endowment, with support from Kaiser Permanente’s Community Benefit program. Using CPTED strategies, the youth chose to transform the dirty, crime-ridden Lauderbach Park into a safe and healthy place for youth to play. After receiving basic training in leadership development and policy advocacy, the youth interviewed residents about their concerns within and around the park. Youth also convened a public meeting in which city officials listened to the neighborhood concerns. Finally, the City Council was presented with a set of recommendations for park improvements. Ultimately, the City invested \$520,000 to implement these improvements.<sup>2</sup> Improvements included removal and replacement of a tall, overgrown chain link fence with a low, transparent one, improved lighting, construction of a new children’s play area and restrooms, installation of picnic tables, trash cans, and a water fountain, and enhancement of a pedestrian pathway. Over 400 residents attended the re-opening of the park in September 2008 [25-29].

The success and lessons learned from Healthy Eating, Active Communities have laid the foundation for broader city-wide advocacy. In January 2010, the City of Chula Vista, CA was chosen by the Preventing Violence – Healthy Eating, Active Living Program (PV-HEAL) to develop approaches that integrate safety strategies into those that promote healthy eating and active living. The Chula Vista effort represents a collaboration of local youth, CBOs, the public health department, obesity prevention advocates, and violence prevention advocates. Funded by the Convergence Partnership, the group conducted an assessment of six crime-ridden locations in the targeted western areas of the community. Using crime prevention through environmental design principles (CPTED), the collaboration produced a 136-page report highlighting concerns and providing recommendations for improvements. These recommendations are being considered by local governmental agencies and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. The collaboration has also inspired the creation and formal launching of the Chula Vista Utility Box Program, “which engaged youth in beautifying previously neglected and vandalized utility boxes with art that is culturally reflective of the community” [30]. The eight boxes painted through the program remain free of graffiti and other tagging since implementation was completed in September 2011 [24, 30, 31].

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2: Funding for this project came from a \$9 million bond issue adopted in the fiscal year of 2004-2005 to be “repaid from the City’s Residential Construction Tax (RCT) revenues over a period of 30 years.” (pg. 279 of FY10-11 budget)

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### Traffic Safety Improvements Brooklyn, NY

Pedestrian and bicycle safety from motor vehicles can be improved through traffic calming measures and the inclusion of physical infrastructure that supports active modes of transportation. The purpose of traffic calming is to reduce vehicle speeds, thereby improving safety for all modes of transportation. Traffic calming measures include education, enforcement, and engineering strategies; however, most projects focus heavily on engineering measures to change drivers' behavior. Speed reduction techniques include roundabouts, speed bumps, narrowing lanes, etc. Traffic volume reduction techniques include median barriers and dead-ending streets to reduce through traffic. Physical infrastructure that supports active modes of transportation includes sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and crossing aids [32].

During the late 1990s streets in Downtown Brooklyn were overtaxed by vehicular traffic. In response, local elected officials, community groups, the New York City administration, and the New York City DOT created the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming Project. The project's goals were "to establish a more equitable balance in the use of area streets by pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists, to rationalize circulation, and to maintain or improve mobility for all transportation modes without adversely impacting community access and adjacent area traffic" within a 10 square mile area [33]. With the input of community members, a street management framework, a traffic calming strategy, and an action plan were created. During the planning process different traffic calming measures were piloted at select intersections and monitored for success. Finally, traffic calming projects costing \$10 million were implemented in four phases.<sup>3</sup> The project's final report serves as a living document guiding all future street management within the Downtown Brooklyn area [33, 34].

Examples of completed traffic calming measures include:

- \* Parking regulation changes allowing parking where previously prohibited (this narrows the roadway, promoting slower vehicle speeds)
- \* Creation of pedestrian refuges and increased pedestrian crossing times (this improves pedestrian safety).
- \* Creation of a pedestrian plaza at a high pedestrian activity location (this creates an auto-free zone).
- \* Addition of bike lanes (this narrows the roadway, promoting slower speeds and building the bike network).
- \* Installation of signals and stop signs (this slows vehicle speeds and provides additional pedestrian crossing opportunities).
- \* Reduction of number of travel lanes to make a left turn bay (this reduces speeds and makes left turns safer).
- \* Installation of speed humps (this reduces speeds) [35].

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<sup>3</sup>: The project was funded through the City's Capital Plan.

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## *Safe Routes to School Boulder, CO*

In 2005 that US Congress passed federal legislation establishing a National Safe Routes to School Program.<sup>4</sup> Federal Safe Route to School funds, funneled through states, finance infrastructure projects and non-infrastructure activities to improve children’s safety when walking, bicycling, or otherwise actively commuting to school. Municipalities must apply to their state for funding. Municipalities are advised to consider a “Five E’s” approach, including engineering, enforcement, encouragement, education, and evaluation, to improve students’ safety on their routes to school. In Buffalo, Hamlin Park School #74 has received a \$550,000 award through the state Safe Routes to School program. A description of successful projects, activities, and lessons learned from programs across the United States are available through the national program office [36].

Boulder, CO is home to an award winning Safe Routes to School program at Bear Creek Elementary School. Using Safe Route to School funds,<sup>5</sup> Bear Creek Elementary created the “Car-Free Commute Program” in 2007. Before the program was implemented, only 25% of students walked or bicycled to school. After only two years, 70% of the student population walked or biked to school year-round. During the International Walk to School Day, zero cars were parked in the Bear Creek Elementary school parking lot.

Many students get to school via walking school buses supervised by parent volunteers. Students who live far away may be dropped at walking bus stops on the way to school, rather than be driven all the way to school. In addition to walking school buses, the program offers several other incentives for active commuting. The Cruger Cup—a year-long challenge created by the school principal—challenges students to get to school daily through active transportation methods, including biking, walking, scootering, or by a “ride and stride” method.<sup>6</sup> The principal models the desired transit behaviors by using a new form of active transportation to travel to school at the beginning of each month.

In the Tour de French initiative, classes compete against each other to accumulate the most walking, biking, or ride-sharing trips to school. Additionally, students receive support and encouragement from local agencies (school district, transportation department, and police department), non-profits (Community Cycles, YMCA, and Eco-Cycle), and local businesses. Educational and informational materials are provided by the school district: students and parents have access to “a new web site for the local Safe Route to School programs, a new bicycle education curriculum known as BLAST (Bike Lesson and Safety Training) to be taught in PE classes, and Safe Routes Walk-Bike maps” [37].

The success of Bear Creek educational initiatives would not be possible without a supportive built environment. Infrastructure improvements were made to the area by the city, Forestry and Transportation Department, and school district prior to receiving Safe Route to School funds. In 2009 the city received \$154,000 in federal Safe Route to School funds to retrofit two nearby intersections along popular walking/biking routes to the Bear Creek Elementary School. Improvements were completed in winter 2010 and included enlarging and creating new pedestrian refuge islands, as well as constructing a speed hump and a curb extension [37-39].

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4: The idea for safe routes to school programs dates to the 1970s.

5: The school received a portion of \$36,000 Safe Route to School funds (shared with 2 other schools) and an additional portion of \$73,448 Safe Route to School funds (shared with five other schools).

6: To be eligible for “Ride and Stride,” students who live far away have the option of being driven part of the way to school and walking the rest of the way.

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### *Access to Safe Environments after School Hours: Joint-Use Agreements New York City, New York*

A joint-use agreement can be made between a municipality and its school district to allow public access to school amenities during non-school hours. Such an agreement provides children with access to safe environments to be physically active after school hours. Although municipalities were initially hesitant to implement such agreements due to financial, liability, scheduling, and maintenance-related concerns, a number of successful examples demonstrate how to tackle these concerns [40].

In 2007, New York City initiated the “Schoolyards to Playgrounds Initiative” in response to the City’s Comprehensive Plan (PlaNYC) goal to “ensure all New Yorkers live within a ten-minute walk of a park” [41]. Through joint use agreements, the City’s Park Department is partnering with the Department of Education (DOE) and the non-profit Trust for Public Land (TPL) to open 258 schoolyards for public use by 2013. The City is investing \$87.6 million from the capital budget to improve or convert these schoolyards into playgrounds and community parks equipped “with fields, basketball courts, play equipment, gardens, and trees” [42]. The playgrounds will be open year round; on weekdays after school hours until dusk and from 8 a.m. until dusk on weekends and during school breaks. They open on a rolling basis as improvements are completed. Estimates suggest that “this program will allow more than 400,000 children and their families to be within a ten minute walk of a park or playground by 2030” [43]. Currently, 207 schoolyards to playgrounds have been opened to the public and “71 percent of New Yorkers ... live within a 10 minute walk of a park or playground” [42]. Sites will be maintained by the Department of Education [42-45].



### *Neighborhood Associations: A Multi-Pronged Approach*

Some neighborhoods are creating neighborhood associations to tackle community problems, especially the lack of safety. These associations are usually non-profit organizations founded by concerned and vocal neighborhood leaders, and regularly partner with district council members and the police to address the concerns of the community.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1962 to improve the inner-city, northern Chicago neighborhood of Logan Square. Safety from gang violence and drug activity is a major concern for many residents. A four-pronged strategy is used to tackle this issue. First, the association has increased participation in crime prevention by organizing the Logan Square Safety Committee and educating residents about their crime prevention rights. Secondly, the association promotes principles of restorative justice which focuses on the needs of the victims and offenders, rather than focusing entirely on punishing the offenders. Third, the association “nurtures a community culture that actively discourages the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs amongst youth” [46]. Lastly, the association works to increase safety within schools, on school grounds, and along routes to schools. In 1995 a Parent –Mentor program was created to hire and train parents to assist neighborhood school teachers. To date, over 1,000 parents serving eight neighborhood schools have participated in this program. Additionally, many of these parents act as crossing guards, helping children cross smaller streets where city-provided crossing guards are not available. In 2006, the association partnered with the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) to train parents to captail walking school buses. As of 2007, the walking school bus had 11 captains stationed along 10 routes serving 70 walking students. Unfortunately, 2007 was the last year LSNA coordinated the program; however, some routes are still run by parents without the support of LSNA. The LSNA also addresses safety indirectly by providing community learning centers and summer employment for youth. Partnering with local schools, the association and community members have created six community learning centers providing free education classes, art classes, and sports in a safe environment for youth after normal school hours. Additionally, through funding from After School Matters and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the association is able to provide summer jobs to local youth, teaching them valuable job skills and responsibility while keeping them off the street and out of gangs. LSNA is funded by government entities, foundations, corporations, and individual and member group donors [46, 47].

**BEST PRACTICE**

**Spreading the Message:  
Supporting Physical Activity through the Media**

While providing necessary active living infrastructure and safe environments are essential components of increasing youth's physical activity levels, they cannot be expected to modify sedentary human behaviors entirely on their own. Another necessary component of increasing physical activity is through education and awareness. People are more likely to be physically active once they are educated on the benefits of physical activity and are aware of local opportunities to engage in physical activity. Spreading this message can be difficult. A media campaign is highly visible and probably one of the best ways to reach the sedentary population.

*NashVitality  
Nashville, TN*

Nashville's Metro Public Health Department (MPHD) is implementing an initiative which facilitates healthy eating and active living for Nashville residents through environmental, systems, and policy change. One strategy of the initiative is to develop and implement a city-wide branding campaign known as NashVitality. With funding support from a 2-year, \$7.5 million Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant awarded in 2010, NashVitality campaign celebrates all things healthy, active and green in Nashville. NashVitality celebrates the achievements of individuals, communities, businesses, non-profits, and anyone else "making the healthy choice, the easy choice" for Nashville. The NashVitality campaign has been promoted through paid advertising and earned media [48, 49].

The paid advertising campaign is fully funded through a dedicated \$1.6 million of the CPPW grant. The advertisements celebrate NashVitality and point viewers and listeners to the campaign's website. Television advertising was purchased through one primary media partner (Newschannel 5 WTVF) and ran in two-week blocks over a nine-month period. Print media targeted niche and community papers, while select initiatives were communicated via radio advertising. Advertisements within and on Metro Nashville busses were purchased for a 12-month period. Additionally, billboard advertisements in the urban core were purchased for a 6-month period. NashVitality has also obtained earned media (media opportunities they received for free). NashVitality was given a booth at Nashville's largest free music event, "Live on the Green," providing excellent exposure for brand awareness, social media, and community involvement. NashVitality partnered with community members to organize a "Let's Move" flash mob which performed several times throughout the city. The City's Mayor also declared "NashVitality Week" in January which encouraged city residents to make New Years' resolutions for 2012 that encompass improvements in healthy eating, active living, volunteerism and sustainability. NashVitality releases biweekly newsletters which provide "updates on healthy, active, and green happenings." The campaign is connected to popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Finally, the campaign's website provides relevant news, health tips, healthy places maps, educational videos, links to partner sites, information about upcoming events, opportunities to get involved in healthy place advocacy, and other resources for living a healthy, active, and green life [48, 49]. Nashville intends to evaluate the success of its media campaign in 2012.

**BEST PRACTICE**

**Partnerships:**

**Partnering to promote active living<sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>7</sup>: The Philadelphia case example was provided by Sara Solomon from the City of Philadelphia.

*Get Healthy Philly  
Philadelphia, PA*

Philadelphia has engaged in citywide efforts to promote physical activity through partnerships among multiple public and private agencies. In 2010, the Philadelphia Department of Health (DOH) was awarded funds from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work Initiative to promote healthy nutrition and increase physical activity. Through this funding, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health created “Get Healthy Philly,” a citywide initiative that aims to make it easier for all Philadelphians to eat healthy and be active through a series of policy, system and environmental changes in worksites, community food retail, the built environment and education institutions. In partnership with non-profit, academic and government agencies, Get Healthy Philly is working to increase the availability and affordability of healthy foods, decrease the availability and marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, and increase physical activity among Philadelphians [53-55]. Get Healthy Philly is working to increase opportunities for physical activity with direct impact on youth through a partnership between the Department of Public Health, the City Planning Commission, the Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities, the Police Department, and the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia.

Strategies within this category include completing a citywide roadmap for walkability and bike-ability, promoting active living through zoning and planning, creating a safer, more connected street and trail network for walking and biking, and decreasing pedestrian and bike injuries through education and enforcement. During the first year of the initiative, the partnership created two north and south bike lanes, developed a sidewalk inventory of existing safety conditions, created two health impact assessments that document new planning considerations and the impact they have on health, and launched a Safe Routes to School initiative for every 2nd and 5th grader in Philadelphia public schools [53-55].

Get Healthy Philly also works in school and afterschool settings. Through a partnership with the School District of Philadelphia and The Food Trust, 160 schools have created school wellness councils to help implement opportunities for physical activity during the school day. Through this effort, 83 schools are implementing socialized recess and 42 have started classroom movement breaks to incorporate short bouts of physical activity during the school day. In after-school settings, through a partnership with the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department and the Health Promotion Council, nutrition and physical activity standards have been developed to incorporate into after-school policy. In addition, over 111 Recreation Specialty Instructors (RSIs) have been trained to implement a research-based physical activity curriculum [53-55].

## BEST PRACTICES

### **Funding:**

### **Financing Complete Streets and Active Living Projects**

Construction and long-term maintenance costs for new and active transportation infrastructure require financial resources. Below are examples of how cities used alternative funding options to improve the built environment to support active living [1].<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>: Determining the legal feasibility of these financing alternatives was beyond the scope of this brief but remains an issue that must be addressed prior to their implementation.

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### Transportation Utility Fee

Some municipalities have used transportation utility fees to fund improvements that aid active transportation. A transportation utility fee, also known as a transportation maintenance fee, street maintenance fee, or street utility fee, is a monthly user fee paid by city residents, businesses, government agencies, schools, etc. based on their use of the transportation system. Fees are usually included on the city's utility bill. Revenue from this fee can only be used to maintain transportation infrastructure. Residential fees typically range from approximately \$1 to \$12 per month. Other land uses often pay much higher fees based on their predicted traffic generation. Compared to a tax, a fee faces fewer legal hurdles and public opposition.

Many cities in Oregon,<sup>9</sup> Montana, and Colorado have adopted these types of fees [2-6]. Oregon City, Oregon adopted a transportation utility fee in 2008. The city was in dire need of revenue because the gas tax did not generate enough money to cover the minimum road maintenance costs. Initially, the residential monthly fee was \$4.50. To achieve the desired level of roadway maintenance, the City Commission gradually increased the fee to \$11.22 over five years. The stepped increase was chosen so that the community could adjust to the fee and budget for it over time. Nonresidential fees were also set to increase gradually over five years. The city estimated that \$1.5 million was generated in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. In Oregon City, these funds can be used only for roadways—not for sidewalks; however, funds have been used to improve pedestrian crossings and ADA compliant ramps. Funds have also been used to widen shoulders on roadways to better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and to restripe new pavement with narrower vehicle lanes and added bike lanes [5-7].

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9: Oregon cities: Ashland, Canby, Bay City, Corvallis, Eagle Point, Grants Pass, Hillsboro, Hubbard, La Grande, Lake Oswego, Medford, Milwaukie, North Plains, Oregon City, Philomath, Phoenix, Talent, Tigard, Tualatin, West Linn, and Wilsonville. Montana cities: Bozeman, Billings, Helena, Hamilton, Lewistown, Livingston, Butte-Silver Bow. Colorado city: Loveland.

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### *Development Impact Fee or Development Excise Tax*

Some municipalities utilize a development impact fee—a one-time fee collected from a new development to pay for its fair share of future capital improvements necessitated by growth. The impact fee can be used only for capital improvements, not maintenance or operating costs. Usually, a specific portion of this fee is earmarked for transportation infrastructure improvements. Many cities—especially in Arizona,<sup>10</sup> Colorado, Florida, Oregon, and Washington—have adopted these types of fees [8, 9].

Similar to a development impact fee, a development excise tax is a one-time tax collected on new development to fund new infrastructure. The excise tax can be rolled into the city's general funds. Unlike a development impact fee, however, an excise tax does not have to be specifically earmarked to benefit new growth. Taxes can be calculated as a percentage of construction cost, a flat fee per acre, or a flat fee by building type [8].

The City of Boulder, CO uses both a development impact fee and a development excise tax. Current rates for both are based on a detailed study conducted for the city in 2008 and 2009. The development impact fees are assessed on new residential and nonresidential development, additions to existing residential uses, and redevelopment of existing nonresidential uses. Fees are calculated as either a flat rate per unit or per square foot depending on land use. Revenue from these fees pay for costs associated with parks and recreation among other public amenities and services. The development excise taxes are assessed on new residential and nonresidential development as well as nonresidential additions. The excise tax has been earmarked for park land and transportation. Nonresidential development must pay \$2.48 per square foot towards transportation infrastructure improvements and nothing for park land. Detached residential dwelling units are assessed \$2,061.90 per unit for transportation and \$1,060.00 for park land while attached residential dwelling units are assessed \$1,528.00 for transportation and \$737.00 for park land. Funds from the excise tax are used to support the vision of the 2003 Transportation Master Plan including roads, intersections, bike lanes, underpasses, and pedestrian enhancements [8, 10, 11].

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<sup>10</sup>: Arizona cities: Avondale, Phoenix, and Tucson. California cities: Long Beach, Sacramento, and San Diego. Colorado cities: Commerce City, Fort Collins, and Loveland. Florida cities: Fort Myers, Miami, and Tampa. Oregon cities: Eugene, Portland, and Springfield. Washington cities: Bellevue, Burlington, and Olympia.

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## *Congestion Pricing*

Congestion pricing uses the theory of supply and demand to place varying fees on vehicular travel during peak times, thereby encourage travelers to shift purely discretionary trips to other transportation modes or to off-peak periods. A small reduction in the number of vehicles traveling during peak hours greatly reduces congestion and allows the transportation system to work more efficiently. Congestion pricing can be placed on particular road segments (such as highways or bridges) or within/crossing certain boundaries (such as downtown). Resulting funds can then be used for transportation infrastructure improvements [12].

In London, England motorists are charged £10 per day<sup>11</sup> to drive within the central city charging zone during peak hours (7:00 am to 6:00 pm on weekdays). A failure to pay the fee results in a fine of £120. A 90% discount is provided to residents living within (and near) the central city charging zone and certain vehicles are charged reduced fees or are altogether exempt from the fee. During the 2009/10 financial year, this fee generated £148 million in net revenue [14-16]. By law, net revenue from the congestion charge must be used to improve transport within London with particular emphasis on the following areas:

- \* Bus network improvements
- \* Accelerating or extending accessibility improvements
- \* Interchange improvements
- \* Contributing to the cost of developing high quality alternatives to the use of private cars
- \* Safety and security improvement schemes
- \* Accelerating road and bridge maintenance [programs]
- \* Increasing late night public transport
- \* Additional funding for borough transport initiatives (contributing to Government targets to reduce road congestion, increase use of public transport, reduce casualties and reduce greenhouse gases)
- \* Restructuring fares on public transport
- \* Improvements to the walking and cycling environment
- \* Improvements to the street environment” [13]

When first implemented, the fee led to a 15 percent reduction in traffic circulation within the zone during charging hours and a 30 percent decrease in congestion (the delay experienced by vehicles using the zone). While the reduction in traffic circulation has been sustained over time, congestion has recently returned to pre-charging levels. “One year after the introduction of the charge, of the car trips that were no longer made to the charging zone during charging hours, between 50 and 60 percent transferred to public transport, 20 to 30 percent diverted around the charging zone (these being trips with both origins and destinations outside of the zone) and 15 to 25 percent made other adaptations, such as changing the timing of trips” [14]. Recently, during charging hours, the number of bus passengers has increased 6%. The changes have also promoted bicycling; although bicyclists account for just two per cent of all travelers entering the area “during the morning peak hours, their numbers have doubled between 2000 and 2008” [14-16].

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11: The price is £12 if paid on the day following use of the zone.

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### *Parking Taxes, Levies, and Fees*

Vehicular parking-related revenues can finance active living infrastructure. Three parking-related revenues used to finance planning objectives include special sales tax on commercial parking transactions, taxes on parking facilities, and charge for on-street and off-street parking in public spaces.<sup>12</sup> The *special sales tax collected on commercial parking transactions* is charged on vehicles parked in commercial parking lots or garages and can be a percentage of the parking fee (e.g. New York City, 18.375% on commercial, 10.375% on residential) or a flat rate fee (e.g. Chicago, \$1.00-\$120.00 depending on parking fee and duration of stay). A second option is to apply a *special levy/tax on parking facilities based on the number of spaces* (e.g. Sydney, Australia, \$2,100 levy per non-residential space) or *surface area* (e.g. Montreal, \$4.95-\$19.80 tax per square meter depending on location and whether the lot is indoors or outdoors). A third option is to *charge fees on-street parking spaces and off-street public parking spaces*. Funds from these types of parking fees can be invested directly back into local neighborhood infrastructure improvements [17-22].

### *Private Advertising in the Public Right-of-Way*

Another method is to use funds from private advertising in the public right-of-way for active living infrastructure. Possible advertising locations include transit shelters and vehicles, existing bicycle parking infrastructure, street furniture, and utility poles.

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<sup>12</sup>: Although the following case study examples do not necessarily use the generated funds for complete street improvements, if similar parking taxes/levies/fees were implemented in the city of Buffalo, they could be earmarked for that purpose.

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**BEST PRACTICE**

**Doing it All:  
Using a Comprehensive Approach  
to Promote Physical Activity**

### *Bridging the Gap: How the City of Seattle is Creating a Multi-Modal Transportation System*

Seattle, WA, is leading the way in promoting physical activity using a comprehensive approach. A complex funding strategy has financed implantation of plans and policies that promote active living and establishment of complete streets. The city has funded implementation of complete street improvements, public transportation improvements, and ongoing Safe Route to School programs. Public funding is also being used to acquire and develop parks and green spaces. Multiple public agencies are participating in promoting active living efforts. The Seattle Police Department promotes Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. The Seattle School District and Parks and Recreation Department have entered into a joint use agreement to open their grounds and facilities to the public. Additionally, a recent CPPW grant awarded to the Public Health Department is being used to fund school districts, community-based organizations, and local governments to improve physical activity as well as fund a media campaign to promote healthy living.

In 2006, Seattle faced an enormous backlog of transportation maintenance projects, for which costs exceeded available public revenues. The solution was an innovative funding program known as ‘Bridging the Gap’ [56]. The program combines funds from four sources. First, in 2006, Seattle residents passed a property tax levy to generate \$365 million in revenue over a nine-year period [57]. Second, in 2006, the City passed a commercial parking tax (10% of the parking fee) [58]. Third, also in 2006, the City passed an approximately \$25 tax per full time employee working within the city and traveling by single occupancy vehicle (SOV) [59]. Collection was difficult and the employee tax was repealed in 2010 [60]. The last funding source is through funding from the Seattle Department of Transportation [56].

The nine-year goals of the program are to “address the City’s mounting transportation problems and create a strong foundation for Seattle’s transportation future by reducing the infrastructure maintenance backlog by approximately half and investing in major transportation projects” [61]. These projects include motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit plan, policy, infrastructure, and programmatic improvements [56].

One of the early successes of the program was the 2007 adoption of a complete streets ordinance that make the multi-modal transportation goals of Bridging the Gap a legal necessity for all capital improvement projects (not just those funded through Bridging the Gap) [62]. Complete streets principles have also been incorporated into both new and updated versions of past plans (Transportation Strategic Plan – 2005, Transit Master Plan – 2005 and currently being updated, Bicycle Master Plan – 2007, Pedestrian Master Plan – 2009). Additionally, the City’s Right-of-Way Improvements Manual—used primarily by private developers as a design standards manual—was updated in 2011 to place greater focus on complete streets [56, 62].

With policy, plans, and funding all in place to support complete streets, many projects have been successfully implemented. Levy funds are required to be split between maintenance (67%), pedestrian/bicycle/safety programs (18%), and enhanced transit services (15%). During the first four years of the program (2007-2010) maintenance projects have included 133 new pedestrian countdown signals, 69.35 new sidewalk block faces, 3,312 re-marked crosswalks, 112.32 miles of new bike lanes, 3,329 new trees planted, and 128.31 road lane miles paved. Additionally, 43 locations were improved for pedestrian safety, 42 crossing improvements were implemented, and 268 speed watch trailers were deployed.

Furthermore, six transit corridor improvement projects have been implemented. Seventeen Neighborhood Street Fund Large Projects<sup>13</sup> have been selected, designed, and implemented over a 3 year phase (2007-2009). Eleven additional Neighborhood Street Fund Large Projects were selected in 2010, designed in 2011, and are slated for implementation in 2012. All projects are prioritized based on need, impact, and their contribution to the completion of the transportation network [56, 63].

### **Levy to Finance Active Living Amenities (Parks and Green Space)**

In 2008, Seattle voters passed the Parks and Green Space Levy. The levy funds the acquisition and development of parks and green spaces, as well as community-initiated projects to create healthier ecosystems. The levy, which lifts the lid on property taxes, will generate \$146 million from 2009 to 2014. Of this, \$35.7 million is dedicated towards property acquisition; \$87.3 for various development projects; \$15 million for community initiated projects (through an ‘Opportunities Fund’); and \$8 million for creating a healthy ecosystem (through an ‘Environment fund’). To date, three green spaces and three neighborhood park properties have been acquired. Additionally, 25 development projects—ranging from playground renovation and improvements to development of a new skatepark—have been completed. Furthermore, opportunity funds amounting to \$7 million were recently awarded to 15 community-initiated projects during the first of two funding cycles. Lastly, environmental funds have helped restore 126.1 acres of park land, plant 12,000 seedlings and 30,000 native shrubs, and support Seattle’s municipally-run P-Patch Community Gardens Program [64-66].

### **Funding Safety Measures**

A portion of the Bridging the Gap levy funds are dedicated to provide ongoing local funding for Safe Routes to School programs. The Seattle Department of Transportation selects five schools per year to receive this funding for “engineering improvements, an education and encouragement campaign and additional enforcement efforts.”<sup>14</sup> Engineering solutions are completed during the summer, while education and encouragement programs begin during October. During the first five years of the funding strategy (2007-2011) the walking routes at 25 schools were improved for safety. Additionally, school zone signs have been improved at 164 schools. School speed zone flashing lights have been installed at 18 schools. Mini grants up to \$1,000 have been provided directly to 67 schools or PTAs for school-initiated programs that encourage more walking and biking to school [67, 68].

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) promotes Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and encourages neighborhoods to understand and utilize CPTED principles. Designated Crime Prevention Coordinators offer free security assessments to both residential and commercial interests. They review blueprints, and make comments on designs or re-designs of parks and schools. Recommendations are often heeded, as it is better to include crime prevention strategies during initial design phases rather than to attempt to retrofit completed projects. The Crime Prevention Coordinators have also given CPTED presentations to blockwatch groups and have held public seminars. Moreover, CPTED information can be found on the SPD website [69, 70].

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13: Neighborhood Street Fund Large Projects are proposed by local community members. Proposals are evaluated by their impact, broad support of the community, leveraging opportunities, and equity. Each District Council chooses the best three projects from their district. The Seattle Department of Transportation and Seattle Parks and Recreation conduct feasibility and cost analysis for these projects. The city and the Mayor have final approval over which projects are funded. Funds can only be used for park or street improvements.

14: Additional periodic funding is provided through grants from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation

### Inter-agency collaboration: Joint Use Agreement

The Seattle School District and the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department have been collaborating since the 1920s to meet the recreational needs of Seattle residents. In September 2010, they entered a complex joint-use agreement which simplifies the scheduling of school and city recreation facilities. First priority scheduling is given to youth programming, while second priority is given to adult or community events. The joint-use agreement covers school buildings, athletic complexes, athletic fields, tennis courts, and performing arts facilities. It also covers Parks Department community centers, swimming pools, tennis courts, athletic fields, and scoreboards. Additionally, 39 schools use adjacent Park Department parks daily for recess and physical education classes [71, 72].

### Promoting Physical Activity during and after the School Day

In 2010, Public Health-Seattle & King County was awarded a CPPW grant of approximately \$25 million to tackle obesity and tobacco use. Of this money, Public Health “awarded 55 grants totaling \$8.9 million to fund school districts, community-based organizations, and local governments to improve nutrition and physical activity, and decrease tobacco use and exposure in King County” [73]. Forty-one of these grants went directly to obesity prevention, including active living initiatives. The Seattle Public School District is using CPPW funds for the implementation of the “Five for Life” physical education curriculum in 21 elementary schools, a program that “builds knowledge, fitness, movement skills, social well-being and confidence” through fun and meaningful physical education classes. Changes in students’ fitness levels are monitored through pre-measurements, goal setting, and post measurements. Although CPPW funding is ending, this program will both continue and expand using recently acquired Physical Education for Progress (PEP) grant funding from the Federal Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

In November 2010 the [King County Food and Fitness Initiative](#) was awarded an 18 month CPPW grant to improve access to healthy food and active living in Delridge and White Center. For the active living aspect of the program, the initiative chose to focus on promoting a Safe Routes to School bike club for Denny International Middle School and Chief Sealth High School. After several months of planning, program development, and supply acquisition (the initiative bought new bikes) the bike club launched in spring 2011. The bike club offers weekly rides and clinics as well as educational programs teaching cycling mechanic skills. During spring 2011, seven to eight students participated on a weekly basis. These students continued participating in the club through the summer months, completing a 200 mile ride to Portland. The initiative, in partnership with the [Major Taylor Project](#) (of Cascade Bicycle Club), [Bikeworks](#), [Bicycle Alliance of Washington](#), and [Feet First](#) has been expanding the program since the fall. This expansion has included outreach to community leaders and policy makers to promote biking and make needed built environment changes; organizing a bike and walk audit completed by the students in October; and supporting a large scale student-led bike-to-school month campaign, among many other actions. Currently 10 to 12 students participate in the bike club weekly, with several students taking on additional leadership roles and service projects outside of weekly rides. The local YMCA has agreed to pay the bike club leader once CPPW funding ends [73, 76, 77].

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## **Conclusion**

As illustrated in the examples in this brief, local governments can adopt a variety of strategies to support active living. These strategies range from adopting supportive public policies and regulations to financing and implementing capital projects that support active lifestyles. These strategies have the potential to immediately improve city residents' quality of life and to positively impact their long-term, overall health.

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