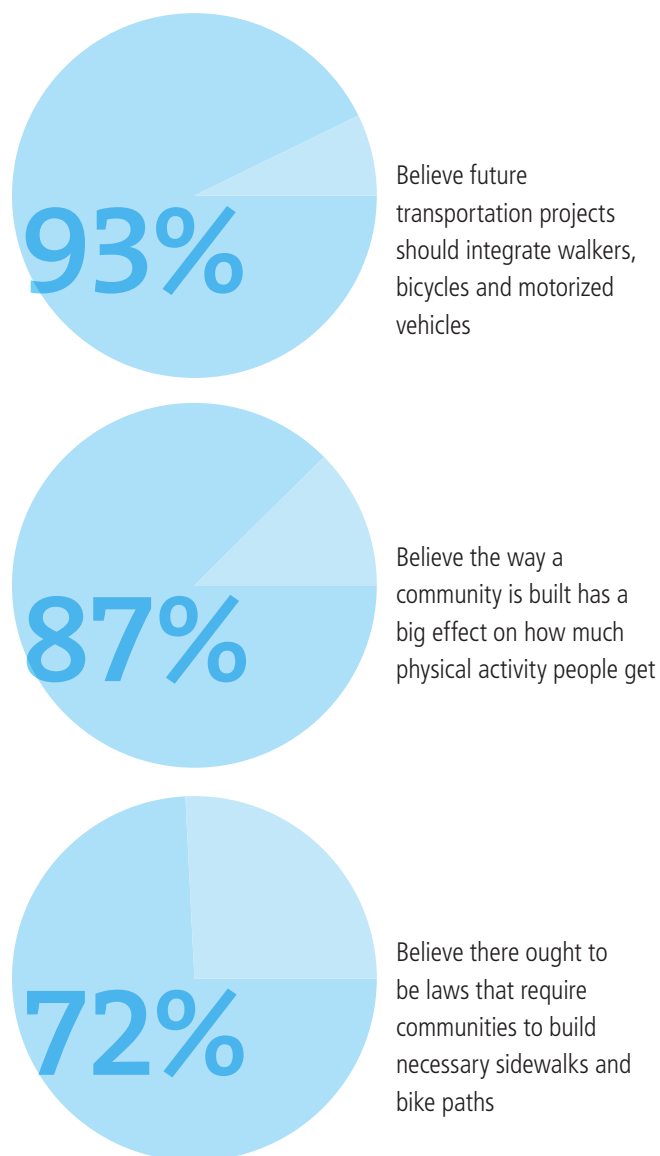


# Complete Streets increase opportunities for physical activity in Minnesota



*The majority of adult Minnesotans believe the built environment influences physical activity and support community policies for active transportation. Support is equally strong from urban and rural areas.*

## **Complete Streets legislation will help improve opportunities for physical activity**

Passage of “Complete Streets” will help assure that, in the future, Minnesota’s roads are designed to be safe and accessible for users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors and persons with disabilities. A state Complete Streets policy means that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will work with communities and stakeholders to ensure all needs are considered for state road projects, removing barriers and simplifying road design to allow local cities and towns the flexibility to create safer roads for all their users. Doing so will allow communities to put in place policies that lead to environments that encourage increased physical activity and more walking and biking. That, in turn, will help to improve the health and well-being of Minnesotans.

To encourage physical activity and prevent chronic diseases and risk factors such as obesity, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that communities and states pass ordinances and laws that create built environments that encourage activity. These evidence-based strategies create places to be physically active and make walking and biking for transportation easier.

Such policy strategies include:

- Improving neighborhood and traffic safety
- Zoning developments to mix residential, commercial, and public uses
- Expanding access to public transportation
- Increasing access to outdoor parks
- Requiring new schools to be built within walking distance of residential areas
- Increasing the miles of available biking and walking paths

### **Minnesotans support policies designed to enhance physical activity**

Making Minnesota's neighborhoods more activity-friendly will help to significantly increase physical activity. Increasing evidence demonstrates that community characteristics can encourage or discourage an active lifestyle, either through activity for leisure or transportation. The 2007 Minnesota Physical Activity Survey found that adult Minnesotans see a strong connection between a community's physical environments and physical activity levels.

- Nearly 90 (87) percent of all respondents agreed that how a community is built has a big effect on how much physical activity individuals get.
- Minnesotans also strongly support policies designed to enhance the built environment to encourage increased physical activity. Nearly all (93 percent) adult Minnesotans believe that future transportation projects should accommodate walkers and bicyclers as well as motorized vehicles, while 72 percent agree that there should be laws that require communities to build sidewalks and bike paths.
- Interestingly, these beliefs were similar among respondents from the seven-county metropolitan area and from greater Minnesota, indicating equally strong support from urban and rural areas.

The health benefits of regular physical activity are well known:

- Weight control
- Reduced risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers
- Improved bone density and muscle strength
- Increased vitality and reduced falls, especially for older Minnesotans

Unfortunately for many Minnesotans, physical activity for transportation is lacking. A recent statewide survey of adults found:

- More than one-third (37 percent) did not walk at least 10 minutes at a time to travel to and from work, to do errands or other transportation
- Another 42 percent did some walking for transportation, but for less than the 150 minutes per week recommended by the CDC
- One-fifth (21 percent) walk for transportation at least 150 minutes each week
- Only 4 percent reported bicycling at least 10 minutes at a time to travel to and from work, to do errands, or other transportation

### **To learn more**

For additional information about increasing access to opportunities for physical activity, see the Minnesota Obesity Plan:

Minnesota Department of Health (2008). Minnesota Plan to Reduce Obesity and Obesity-Related Chronic Diseases: Promoting Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Healthy Weight. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Department of Health. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdrr/obesity/obesityplan/obesityplan.html>.