



Active Michigan Communities

Winter 2007

Welcome



Michigan has embraced winter the way I remember it when I was much younger. Yesterday was like a snow globe in the hands of an overactive child. My husband and I took a late night walk and the trees were heavy with snow and glowing with reflected light creating a magical atmosphere. The roads and yards had that clean look, before too much traffic changes the hue to something much less pleasant; but that meant the sidewalks and trails were also full of snow. Since it was still snowing and also a holiday, I fully expected that; however, it reminded me how important it is for communities to plan carefully for winter months to maintain a walkable, bikeable community year-round. I recall taking public transportation when days (or longer) after a snowfall I was still trudging down snow-filled sidewalks, recognizable only by the narrow paths created from others who walked those routes. I remember realizing the implications of not clearing sidewalks for someone without sight when a fellow bus rider who is blind talked about not being able to tell with his cane where the sidewalks started and stopped on many winter days. And while some may question the need to keep bike lanes clear during winter rather than using that space to hold snow from the roads, cold-weather riding is not impractical. In fact, a recent report showed high rates of bicycle commuting in cities that included cold, snowy places like Minneapolis, while fair weather cities were among those with the worst rates. So...let's embrace active living the Michigan way. Let's become the best in snow removal for all modes of transportation, including walking and bicycling. Enjoy the beauty of our Michigan winter as you stay active and healthy in 2008

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Community Spotlight: Lansing

The City of Lansing earned the Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Bronze level award in 2005 and 2006, but this year the community moved up an award level to Silver. This is due to community efforts that stress healthy and active lifestyles through programs, policies and the built environment. Below are some examples of what this urban city is doing to become an active living community:



- The Lansing Mayor's Task Force on Walking & Bicycling has begun drafting a comprehensive Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, which includes not only infrastructure changes, but also other essential elements to truly make Lansing a walk-and bike-friendly city. The task force is working as a team to complete the chapters, which include the non-motorized network, streets for walking & bicycling, bicycle parking, transit, education, and marketing and health promotion.
- In 2007, the Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA) was voted the #1 public transportation system of its size in the U.S. The bus system includes more than 30 routes and 1,300 bus stops in the Lansing region, which makes it convenient to walk or bicycle to a transit stop or to reach destinations. In addition, CATA has installed bike racks on fixed-route buses to make intermodal commuting easier for Lansing residents.
- The Lansing River Trail not only provides recreation opportunities for residents, but also serves as a connector between Lansing and East Lansing. People can bicycle or walk to work, school, or to run errands using the trail. Besides linking the two communities together, there are destinations (like the Potter Park Zoo) to visit along the trail.
- The Stadium District project is a mixed-used development located on Michigan Avenue in downtown Lansing that will offer offices, retail and restaurant spaces on the first floor with loft condominiums and rental apartments above. The goal of this project is to increase density and promote a walkable community in the downtown area.

Safe Routes to School Inspiration

Are you looking for a way to encourage schools in your community to participate in the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program? Sometimes a great success story can inspire and motivate. Fortunately, the National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership have produced two different resources that could help you share successes and strategies with schools in your community.



The National Center for Safe Routes to School assists communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school by providing valuable technical assistance. The Center offers a centralized resource of information on how to start and sustain a Safe Routes to School program, case studies of successful programs, as well as many other resources for training and technical assistance. For more information, please visit: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

The National Center for Safe Routes to School has produced a collection of case studies on SRTS programs and activities from across the United States. Each case study tells a story and includes a short description of the town or area in which the program takes place, as well as the unique issue that each area faces in regards to safe routes, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and other aspects of getting to and from school safely. To access the document containing all of the case studies, please visit:

drusilla.hsrc.unc.edu/cms/downloads/srts_case_studies.pdf. The case studies are also posted on each respective state page at www.saferoutesinfo.org/contacts. The hope is that these local success stories will spur the growth of SRTS. Do you have a story to tell? Inspire other schools and share your Safe Routes to School activities and successes by submitting a case study at: www.saferoutesinfo.org/case_studies.



Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a network of organizations, government agencies, and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, secure funding, and provide educational materials to agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs. The Partnership's mission is to serve a diverse national community of organizations that advocate for and promote the practice of safe bicycling and walking to and from schools throughout the United States. For more information, visit: <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org>

In October, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership released a national report entitled, [Safe Routes to School: 2007 State of the States](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/rpt_SRTSstates2007.pdf). This report tracks states' progress on the implementation of the \$612 million federal SRTS program that Congress included in the 2005 federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU. The SRTS National Partnership report includes an executive summary, program needs, early success stories of action at the local level, observations and resources. A particularly valuable element of the report is a one-page "State of the States" matrix, featuring an overview of how all states are doing in achieving the following milestones: hiring a full-time state SRTS coordinator, developing an advisory committee, releasing application guidelines, and selecting and awarding projects that have submitted proposals for SRTS funds. The report can be found on-line at: http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/media/file/rpt_SRTSstates2007.pdf



Active Transportation 2010



The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has kicked off the 2010 Campaign for Active Transportation. This is a grassroots movement to make walking and bicycling mainstream transportation options for communities across the country. The campaign will empower at least 40 communities to advocate for \$50 million in the next federal transportation reauthorization, anticipated by 2010.

In the last transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU), Congress funded the Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program, a demonstration effort to promote **active transportation** for urban mobility. The basic premise of the pilot program is that focused community investments in active transportation infrastructure—such as rail-trails—and supporting programs will increase the share of trips taken by bicycling or walking. This program introduces a network of non-motorized transportation infrastructure facilities in 4 selected communities ([Columbia, MO](#); [Marin County, CA](#); [Minneapolis Area, MN](#); [Sheboygan County, WI](#)) that connect directly with transit stations, schools, residences, businesses, recreation areas, and other community activity centers. Interconnected active transportation systems will decrease congestion and improve the health of residents, as well as the environment and economic viability of communities by providing new choices to people for everyday travel decisions.

The 2010 Campaign for Active Transportation seeks to spread Pilot Program approach to dozens more communities and attract a level of investment sufficient to enable active transportation to play a significantly larger role in meeting America's mobility needs. RTC needs wants your community to participate in this movement to help make it a reality. Local actions or campaigns supporting active transportation in your community can prepare the groundswell necessary to give Americans the choice of safe and convenient bicycling and walking options. RTC has provided a series of issue briefs (see below) to help you "make the case" for active transportation in your community. Over the coming months, RTC will roll out a 2010 Toolkit to provide communities with specific guidance for building an active transportation campaign. For more information, please visit: <http://www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailadvocacy/2010Campaign.html>

Active Transportation Facts Sheets

Have you been looking for information to support your efforts to advocate for active transportation options in your community? Fortunately, the Rails to Trail Conservancy (RTC) offers some great informational handouts that highlight useful statistics, case studies and success stories to bring to life the benefits of active transportation. Understanding the many benefits of active transportation will help you more effectively build a case for environmental and policy change in regards to walking and bicycling when you talk with local government officials or other organizations. There are fact sheets that illustrate the benefits that active transportation has for:

1. [Mobility](#)
2. [Economic Development](#)
3. [Climate](#)
4. [Family and Community](#)
5. [Health](#)

For more information, please visit: <http://www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/trailadvocacy/2010Campaign.html>



Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan



In 2007, Michigan received a National Governor's Association award through the Healthy Kids, Healthy America Program to conduct the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan project. The goal of this project is to create a five-year strategic policy agenda to address childhood obesity in community, school, health care, family and child service settings and to disseminate policy recommendations to legislators to assist them and other executive-level decision makers in adopting policy change.

As part of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan project, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) recently completed a statewide scan of childhood obesity programs, policies, and resources in Michigan to better understand the current status of childhood obesity efforts in the state and to enhance the development of the strategic agenda. To accomplish this, a survey was distributed to more than 150 state and local organizations. The results of the statewide scan indicated that there are a large number of programs and informational resources dedicated to fighting childhood obesity; however, few organizations have implemented policies. This suggests that creating policy recommendations that will facilitate childhood obesity policy development and implementation is needed in Michigan. Another key finding was that most childhood obesity initiatives were targeted at elementary and middle-school aged children, whereas there were fewer efforts directed toward infant/toddler/preschool and high school aged children. Identifying this gap in targeting age groups will allow for more strategic distribution of resources to ensure that all age groups are included in the efforts to combat childhood obesity.

This project is being managed by the Governor's office and the Michigan Department of Community Health. The project also includes the formation of the Childhood Obesity Prevention Workgroup that will create the statewide policy agenda. Michigan Surgeon General Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom spearheads the workgroup, which is composed of executive-level decision makers, public and private sector representatives, non-profit organizations, healthcare organization, communities, and schools. In addition to the creation of the workgroup and the strategic policy agenda, three schools districts (Jackson, Lansing and Taylor) received grants to establish a nutrition and/or physical activity policy district-wide. Schools that receive the mini-grants will also have school district staff representation on the Childhood Obesity Prevention Workgroup.



For more information about the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan project, please visit: <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132--148846--,.00.html>

Save the Dates!
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Taking Action to Improve Student Health and Academic Performance

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SAVE THE DATES!

4th Annual Designing Healthy Livable Communities Conference

May 29-30, 2008
Lansing, Michigan



For more information, please visit:
http://michigan.gov/documents/mdch/HealthSchflyer2008_212680_7.pdf

Benchmarking Bicycling & Walking in the U.S.

As part of a Benchmarking Project, the Thunderhead Alliance released its first biennial report on bicycling and walking in the U.S. The Thunderhead Alliance is a national coalition of state and local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations and the benchmarking project is an ongoing effort to collect and analyze data on bicycling and walking from all 50 states and the 50 most populated cities. The report compares bicycling and walking levels, investment in bicycling and walking, and public health.

Results show that bicycling and walking have been in decline in the U.S. since the 1960s; while concurrently, there has been a surge in the percentage of adults and children who are obese. Some of the most striking findings, however, reveal major disparities between bicycling and walking levels, traffic fatalities, and federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects. Bicycling and walking made up 9.6% of all trips in the U.S., yet bicyclists and pedestrians represented 12.9% of all traffic-related fatalities, and only 1.5% of federal transportation dollars were spent on bicycling and walking projects.

This situation is similar in Michigan where bicycling and walking made up 8.4% of all trips, but represented 12.2% of all traffic-related fatalities; statewide, only 1.7% of transportation money was spent on pedestrian and bicycle initiatives. In addition, Michigan has the equivalent of 1 full-time staff person dedicated to walking and bicycling issues, which translated to 0.10 staff people per 1 million residents and was the lowest in the country. The state did have published goals to reduce bicycle and pedestrian fatalities, but did not have goals to specifically address how to increase walking and bicycling. The good news is that Michigan has converted 1398 miles of rails to trails, which was way above the 50 state average of 400 miles.

The Thunderhead Alliance wants advocates, officials, and citizens to use this cutting-edge report to promote a greater investment in bicycling and walking in their communities. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the report results so that you can more effectively advocate for resources to be allocated to walking and bicycling projects. The next benchmarking report is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2009. To learn more about the Thunderhead Alliance and view *Bicycling and Walking in the U.S.* visit <http://www.thunderheadalliance.org/benchmarking.htm>



Land Use Luncheons



Join the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council for first Friday Land Use Luncheons from 12:00 to 1:00pm at the Central United Methodist Church (at Capitol and Ottawa in downtown Lansing) This speaker series is for policy-makers, advocates, and anyone interested in learning more about the decisions shaping Michigan's land use and sustainable growth. It features a light buffet lunch, a presentation given by guest expert, and a questions and answer period. The January through April schedule is:

January 4: Rep. Paul Opsommer (R-DeWitt) "Urban Co-operation Bill: Remediating Obstacles to Regionalism"

February 1: Jeff Padden, President, Public Policy Associates "Successful Strategies -- Revitalizing Michigan's Central Cities"

March 7: Eric Schertzing, Ingham County Treasurer "The Ingham County Land Bank—A Tool for Rebuilding Cities"

April 4: Dr. John Biernbaum, MSU Professor of Plant and Soil Science "The Return to Locally Grown, Healthy Food"

For more information, please visit: www.midmeac.org



MICHIGAN FITNESS FOUNDATION

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About Us

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports was established in 1992 to improve the health of, and increase physical activity among, Michigan residents. The Michigan Fitness Foundation was created in 1994 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit public charity foundation to expedite Governor's Council policies and programs and provide a broader funding base to pursue its mission of Getting Michigan Moving. The foundation is licensed by the Michigan Attorney General to solicit and receive charitable gifts and grants (MICS 11523).

Our Mission

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports envisions a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle in communities designed to support physical activity.

Endorsed Physical Activity Events

Get the Governor's Council's seal of approval on your event! The organization endorses events that encourage physical activity in communities across the state. Physical activity events that range from running races to softball tournaments are eligible to be endorsed by the Governor's Council. Having your event endorsed is free, and gives you additional publicity through the Governor's Council website! Do you have an event that you think could be endorsed by the Governor's Council or do you want to find events that have already been endorsed? Visit <http://www.michiganfitness.org/endorsements/index.php>. If you have questions about the endorsement program, contact Tricia Fraas at (800) 434-8642 or tfraas@michiganfitness.org.

Resources

BIKESAFE. The Bicycle Countermeasure Selection System (BIKESAFE) is intended to provide practitioners and bicycle advocate with the latest information available for improving the safety and mobility of those who bicycle. The information on the site falls into two categories, Resources and Tools. Be sure to look at the available case studies. Available at: <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/bikesafe/index.cfm>

Livable Places. Although this non-profit concentrates efforts in California, the website has a lot of great information about how to create an active living community, including how to plan and implement policies that encourage affordable housing, alternative transportation modes, smart growth, and public input in the planning process. Available at: <http://www.livableplaces.org/>

Health Streets Campaign. The Healthy Streets Campaign is a realistic, innovative package of projects using street design, policy, marketing and enforcement tools to transform selected local and commercial streets (in Chicago). Successes become models for neighborhoods and communities. Available at: <http://www.healthystreets.org/>

To suggest useful resources for this section, please e-mail Sarah at sspanken@michiganfitness.org.

To Subscribe to the Active Michigan Communities Newsletter

Contact Sarah Panken at (800) 434-8642 or
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