

Benefits of Walkable Communities Talking Points

Walking is a healthy, non-polluting, low-cost, quiet, and fun form of transportation that is ideal for many trips, including commuting and shopping. Better conditions for walking will benefit all people who live, work, play, study, and do business in Minnesota. **These talking points are intended to support MnDOT staff at all stages of the planning, design, and engineering process in communicating the benefits of investing in pedestrian improvements.**

Health and Safety Benefits

- **Walking helps Minnesotans meet physical activity recommendations:**
 - About half of Minnesotans meet physical activity recommendations, most of whom do so by including walking as part of their regular physical activity.
- **Walking is the most popular aerobic physical activity in Minnesota and nationally:**
 - While people prefer walking to driving, most say they drive because they have no other options.
- **More walking and less driving leads to healthier people:**
 - Replacing sedentary time spent sitting in a car with walking leads to health benefits. Motor vehicle time is associated with chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes as well as increased stress.
- **Walking instead of driving improves air quality:**
 - Gasoline-powered cars emit carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, sulfur oxide, and other gases associated with asthma attacks and cardiovascular disease.
 - Pregnant people, newborns, children, and people with chronic illnesses are especially vulnerable to air pollution.
- **Designing transportation networks to promote walking results in community-wide health gains:**
 - Cities that are designed to promote walking, bicycling, and public transportation see greater health gains than cities that are dependent on cars.
 - People who live in walkable neighborhoods tend to be familiar with their surroundings, engaged in their community and walk more for day-to-day activities such as trips to the local store and to complete errands.

Economic Benefits

- **Reducing car dependency benefits family budgets:**
 - Living in a walkable community can allow families to go car-lite or car-free.
 - Rural households are especially cost-burdened: they typically earn less than urban families, but own more cars, and spend more on gasoline and motor oil.
- **Reducing car dependency benefits community bottom-lines:**
 - Walkable communities developed according to smart growth principles are more efficient, and cheaper to administer.
 - Walkable neighborhoods generate far greater tax revenue per square foot than all other types of development.
- **Walking is essential for accessing employment:**

- Considering both commuters who primarily walk and commuters who take transit, over 200,000 Minnesotans rely on walking to get to work.
- Seven percent of Minnesota households do not own a car.
- Pedestrian facilities connect people to schools, jobs, recreation, goods and services.

Community and Environmental Benefits

- **Walkable communities are more equitable:**
 - Many Minnesotans rely on walking and cannot drive due to age, disability, immigration status, poverty, and other factors.
- **Walking is key to securing a low-carbon future:**
 - Transportation is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota.
 - To avoid the worst effects of climate change, and to achieve the MN Next Generation Energy Act targets, Minnesota must reduce transportation energy use by 80% by 2050.
- **Walkability enhances quality of life:**
 - People who have places to walk to nearby say they are more satisfied with their quality of life.
- **Less driving and slower speeds mean less noise:**
 - Busy roadways generate high levels of noise, negatively impacting psychological well-being and physical health by increasing blood pressure.