

## *Planning to Encourage Physical Activity*

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) encourages communities to develop and adopt plans for bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks. Goal three of the GMA encourages “efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.”

Recognizing the growing need for physical activity among citizens, the Washington Legislature enhanced the GMA guidelines for multimodal transportation in 2005 when they passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5186. This law amends the GMA and requires that communities:

- Consider urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.
- Include a bicycle and pedestrian component in the Transportation Element of a comprehensive plan.

Planning for multiple modes of transportation is important for communities and for individuals. Consider the following:

- *Sedentary lifestyles have led to an epidemic of obesity in the United States.* Today, nearly one third of American adults are obese and less than half of American adults are at a healthy body weight (*National Institutes of Health* [win.niddk.nih.gov/statistics/index.htm#preval](http://win.niddk.nih.gov/statistics/index.htm#preval)). Increasing rates of obesity and inactivity over the past two decades represent a dramatic shift in American health and lifestyle. Children, whose levels of obesity have skyrocketed, are now more vulnerable to the associated lifelong health risks of diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and heart disease. The Surgeon General has asserted that today’s youth may be the first generation to have a shorter life span than their parents ([www.ehponline.org/docs/2004/112-11/niehsnews.html](http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2004/112-11/niehsnews.html)).
- *Our cities, towns, and neighborhoods often present obstacles to physical activity and contribute to a sedentary lifestyle.* Heavy traffic, fear of crime, great distances between destinations, and the absence of sidewalks prevent people from walking or bicycling to carry out daily tasks. Air pollution from increased use of motor vehicles contributes to poor air quality and increases the risk of asthma, especially among children.
- *Daily physical activities such as walking and cycling can decrease the potential for obesity and its associated health risks.* Physical activity need not be confined to exercise classes or playing sports to be effective. A walkable and bicycle friendly community allows people to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. Local trips can be made on foot or by bicycle at much lower cost than driving, often in much the same time. Commuting and other regular trips can be accomplished by walking or bicycling to a nearby transit stop.

Here are some ways that communities are promoting physical activity through planning.

### *Land Use Approaches*

- **Design for People:** Use design guidelines to foster human-scale, pedestrian-friendly building facades with shelter from the elements, and attractive windows to provide passive surveillance and pedestrian interest. Include street trees, benches, and other amenities to provide a pleasant and human-scaled environment. Consider the need for passive surveillance of public areas and adequate lighting to reduce the potential for personal danger.



- **Smaller, Interconnected Streets:** Plan a fine-grained street network with small blocks that are accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles. Grid-like networks support multiple modes of transportation by distributing traffic across multiple route choices for vehicles and creating quieter, more pleasant streets for walking and bicycling.

- **Add More People:** Encourage infill development in already developed areas. “Filling-in” enriches a community by providing the population densities needed to support high quality transit services, a neighborhood grocery store, and other services. For example, allow subdivision of larger lots to provide new building lots, new home construction on existing smaller lots, division of existing homes into multiple dwelling units, and accessory dwellings (mother-in-law apartments).



*Mill Creek, King County*

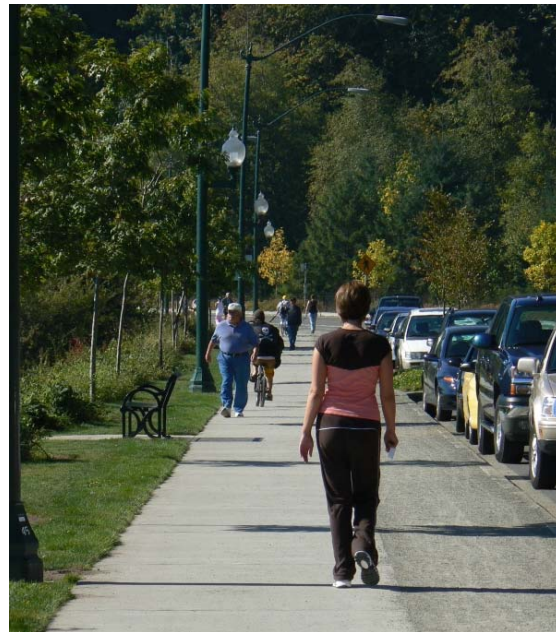
- **Create Centers:** Designate mixed-use community centers that provide for daily needs such as grocery stores, transit stops, coffee shops and public facilities within walking distance of residences. Consider reduced parking requirements and careful site design to encourage walking and bicycling.

### *Transportation Approaches*

- **Create a Network:** Plan an interconnected non-motorized system linking parks, trails, bike lanes and other assets to function not only as recreation facilities, but as a viable and efficient transportation system. Ensure that schools, health care facilities, retail centers, and other activity centers are connected to the network to encourage bicycle, pedestrian and transit access to these facilities and reduce the need for on-site parking. Link dead-end streets as adjacent parcels are developed to further develop the travel network.
- **Make the Space Inviting to Pedestrians:** Provide amenities for bicyclists and pedestrians such as shade trees and landscaping, restrooms, benches, continuous sidewalks, and water fountains. These additions improve a neighborhood for all residents and decrease the barriers that especially prevent children, the elderly and those with physical disabilities from walking and cycling.

Also pay attention to the scale of the urban space. Subtle cues such as the setback of buildings and the height of street lighting should communicate to pedestrians and drivers that the space is designed first as urban space and second as a traffic facility.

Pay special attention to how sidewalks are separated from the roadway. Lateral separation is one of the two most important factors affecting the perception of safety among pedestrians. A sidewalk attached to the curb will feel much less safe than one separated by a landscape strip.



- **Keep Traffic Speed Slow:** Vehicle speed is the second of the two most significant factors affecting pedestrians' perception of safety. The faster the traffic speed, the less comfortable pedestrians will feel. Use traffic calming measures such as narrower road widths, traffic circles, speed humps, and other devices to slow traffic for safer, more attractive and efficient streets. These measures are much more effective at managing vehicle speed than lower speed limits, even with vigorous enforcement.

- **Designate and improve safe routes to school.** All Washington school districts are required to have suggested route plans for every elementary school (WAC 392-151-025). This allows children to be physically active while decreasing the amount of time parents and guardians spend driving them to and from school.

**The following resources can help communities to promote physical activity through planning.**

### *CTED Documents and Resources*

- **Planning for Bicycling and Walking** (ESSB 5186 – August 2005)  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/ta/operations/localplanning/pdf/GMA\\_Ammend.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ta/operations/localplanning/pdf/GMA_Ammend.pdf)
- **Slide show on the requirement** (August 2005) S:/GMU/Staff Folders/Anne/ ESSB 5186 04-06.ppt
- **Active Community Environments Checklist** to help assess your comprehensive plan, development regulations, and programs supporting physical activity – Available from CTED, June 2007.
- **Policy Examples for Bicycling and Pedestrian Excellence** – Available from CTED, June 2007
- **Your Community's Transportation System: A Transportation Element Guide, 1993**
- **Fact Sheet – Connecting Development With Transportation Planning, 2003**  
[cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=883&Mid=944&wversion=Staging](http://cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=883&Mid=944&wversion=Staging)
- **Fact Sheet – GMA Links Transportation and Land Use, 2003**  
[cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&alias=CTED&lang=en&ItemID=891&Mid=944&wversion=Staging](http://cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&alias=CTED&lang=en&ItemID=891&Mid=944&wversion=Staging)
- **Planning for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space in Your Community, 2005**  
[www.cted.wa.gov/\\_CTED/documents/ID\\_1691\\_Publications.pdf](http://www.cted.wa.gov/_CTED/documents/ID_1691_Publications.pdf)
- **Model Code Provisions: Urban Streets and Subdivisions, 1998**  
[/cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&alias=CTED&lang=en&ItemID=918&Mid=944&wversion=Staging](http://cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&alias=CTED&lang=en&ItemID=918&Mid=944&wversion=Staging)
- **Coordinating Transportation and Growth Management Planning (1998 Legislation: HB 1487 “Level of Service Bill”) Implementation Guidance**  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/567BC064-151C-495D-8656-912CD18DEA99/0/GMATransCoordination.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/567BC064-151C-495D-8656-912CD18DEA99/0/GMATransCoordination.pdf)

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## ***Other Washington State Resources***

### **Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)**

- ***The Bicycle and Pedestrian Walkways Plan***, part of the *Washington Transportation Plan*  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/2005\\_bicycle\\_transportation\\_pedestrian\\_walkways\\_plan.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/2005_bicycle_transportation_pedestrian_walkways_plan.pdf)
- **Bicycle and pedestrian planning information**  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/Walk](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Walk) and [www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/)
- **Funding**  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Funding.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Funding.htm)
- **Highways and Local Programs**  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/Operations/LocalPlanning/Compplans.html](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/Operations/LocalPlanning/Compplans.html)

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### **Washington State Department of Health (DOH)**

- **Feet First** – Washington State-based organization supporting the creation of walkable communities  
[www.feetfirst.info/](http://www.feetfirst.info/)
- **Safe Routes to School, Washington**  
[www.saferoutes-wa.org/](http://www.saferoutes-wa.org/)
- **Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan**  
[www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/default.htm)

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**Municipal Research & Services Center (MRSC)** has developed Web pages on these topics:

- **Designing Transportation Facilities for Pedestrians and Bicycles**  
[/www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/PlanPedBike.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/PlanPedBike.aspx)
- **Pedestrian Facilities – Sidewalks and Crosswalks**  
[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubWorks/PW-Sidewalk.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubWorks/PW-Sidewalk.aspx)

- **Infill Development: Completing the Community Fabric**  
[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/infilldev.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/infilldev.aspx)
- **Healthy Communities**  
[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/HumanServices/healthyProg.aspx#](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/HumanServices/healthyProg.aspx#)
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**  
[www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/le/le-crime.aspx#Design](http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/le/le-crime.aspx#Design)
- **Park Planning**  
[/www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Parks/parkplanpg.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Parks/parkplanpg.aspx)
- **Sightings: Walkable Communities and Pedestrian Planning.**  
An excellent list of resources with links  
[www.mrsc.org/focus/focusarchive.aspx?y=07&m=03&q=1#1935](http://www.mrsc.org/focus/focusarchive.aspx?y=07&m=03&q=1#1935)
- **Traffic Calming**  
[www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Transpo/traffic/calming.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Transpo/traffic/calming.aspx)

**Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC)** database of infrastructure funding opportunities

[www.infracfunding.wa.gov/](http://www.infracfunding.wa.gov/) including funding from the Transportation Improvement Board at [www.tib.wa.gov/default.asp](http://www.tib.wa.gov/default.asp)

**Washington Traffic Safety Commission** grant funding for education, traffic safety, school zone, and law enforcement initiatives

[www.wtsc.wa.gov/rfp.html](http://www.wtsc.wa.gov/rfp.html)

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#### **National Planning Resources**

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center**  
[www.pedbikeinfo.org/](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/)
- **National Center for Bicycling and Walking**  
[www.bikewalk.org/](http://www.bikewalk.org/)
- **Local Government Commission (California)** has excellent resources on transportation and community design  
  
[www.lgc.org/index.html](http://www.lgc.org/index.html)
- **National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program** provides technical assistance grants

[www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/)

- **National Parks and Recreation Association's** "Step Up to Health It Starts in Parks" Initiative provides training and resources to parks professionals  
[www.nrpa.org/health](http://www.nrpa.org/health)

### ***Active Living Resources***

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, Active Community Environments Initiative  
[www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm)
- **The Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity**  
[www.beactive.org/palinks.html](http://www.beactive.org/palinks.html)
- **The Active Living Network**  
[www.activeliving.org/](http://www.activeliving.org/)
- **The International City Management Association (ICMA)**  
[icma.org/activeliving](http://icma.org/activeliving)
- **Active Living by Design, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**  
[www.activelivingbydesign.org/](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/)
- **National Association of County and City Health Officials**, Community Design and Land Use  
[www.naccho.org/topics/hpdp/Land\\_Use\\_Planning.cfm](http://www.naccho.org/topics/hpdp/Land_Use_Planning.cfm)