

# Recommendations for Healthy & Equitable Transportation



## BACKGROUND

Transportation impacts our health in many ways, from having access to health services and opportunities to impacting our air quality, climate change, physical and mental health, community safety and connectedness to each other. Reliable transportation is a vital social driver of our health. Social drivers or social determinants of health are conditions in which people are born, grow, live, play, work and age. These conditions deeply affect our health and quality of life, and are shaped by distribution of wealth, power and resources.

The American Public Health Association's policy brief on [Ensuring Equity in Transportation and Land-use Decisions](#), paired with a roundtable involving public health and transportation stakeholders, lists key policy priorities for the next surface transportation reauthorization that will yield positive public health outcomes.

- 1. Integrate public health and ensure equity in transportation and land use decisionmaking.** State transportation agencies receive the majority of federal transportation funding for infrastructure needs, with little coordination between transportation planning, public health and the community to monitor and advance the healthiest forms of transportation. It is important for public health to be integrated into transportation planning processes at the state and local levels to ensure our transportation system is safe, healthy, equitable, accessible and reliable for all. Transportation and land use decisions should address the health impacts on communities of color, people with disabilities, territories and tribal communities, rural communities and other vulnerable populations to further health equity.
- 2. Health in All Transportation Policies.** There is unequivocal evidence of how transportation impacts our health, including accessing health-promoting resources; influencing our physical activity; traffic safety; our social cohesion and mental health; and exposure to environmental and climate hazards. Transportation policies, processes, and investments need to facilitate:
  - a. Access to community resources:** Health care facilities, places of employment and education, as well as grocery stores and other services that shape and influence our health.
  - b. Safe and accessible physical activity and nutrition:** Reliable, safe and accessible transportation is a [vital condition](#) for our health and well-being. Access to [active transportation](#), such as using public transit, biking, walking or rolling, increases physical activity that can reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease and other health conditions, as well as reduce personal vehicle use and harmful vehicle emissions.
  - c. Safer streets:** [Complete streets](#), with added features such as bike lanes and other safe street design elements, can help reduce morbidity and mortality related to a transportation system that's [dangerous by design](#), designed primarily to move cars quickly at the expense of keeping everyone safe.

- d. **Access to green space:** Providing safe and accessible options to reach green spaces in communities facilitates social cohesion and overall health and mental health benefits.
  - e. **Reduction in exposure to environmental and climate hazards:** Advancing research and policy outcomes to reduce transportation sourced pollution (i.e., traffic and noise pollution) that contributes to negative health outcomes is vital.
3. **Build capacity for the public health workforce to engage in and be incorporated into the transportation decisionmaking process.** Public health agencies face challenges in engaging in transportation policy because of limited funding, insufficient training and not being invited to participate in state and local transportation decisionmaking. Conducting [health impact assessments](#) should be considered for major transportation projects to understand the potential impacts, risks and benefits before implementation begins. Robust systems are needed to monitor transportation health outcomes, such as traffic crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists, or asthma emergency department visits related to traffic pollution.

## APPENDIX

The following is a list of organizations that endorse this summary of recommendations. The Kresge Foundation is the primary supporter of the climate advocacy work at APHA's Center for Climate, Health and Equity.



The following is a list of individuals who participated in the roundtable, Equitable Transportation for Health and Climate Justice and contributed to the development of this summary of recommendations.

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