

Complete Streets Policy Passes in Minnesota!

New Law will Encourage Physical Activity to Prevent Heart Disease



American Heart Association

American Stroke Association

Learn and Live

you're the **cure.**

OVERVIEW

With Obesity in America at dangerously high levels, every effort should be made to encourage physical activity. The concept of designing Complete Streets is a great step forward in creating environments that promote active living.

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR INACTIVITY

When streets are designed with only cars in mind, they discourage the use of those streets for walking and biking. It is clear that regular physical activity can reduce the risk for obesity and help people lead longer, healthier lives, but so few Americans engage in recommended levels of physical activity. Less than half of US children and adolescents meet the recommended guidelines of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day¹ and data from 2007 indicate that less than half of adults (48.8%) meet the CDC recommended guidelines of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activities 5 days a week, or 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity activities 3 days a week.²

A COMPLETE OPPORTUNITY

Designing streets that incorporate safe sidewalks and bike lanes can have a positive effect on the number of people who meet the daily-recommended activity levels and therefore lower the rate of Obesity and the concomitant costs.

The mere existence of sidewalks and bike paths can have great effects on health and physical activity levels. Studies have shown that more and better quality sidewalks are associated with higher rates of walking and more adults meeting the daily physical activity recommendations.³ Sidewalks are also associated with a lower likelihood of being overweight.⁴

In fact, it has been found that people in walkable neighborhoods generally did about 35-45 more minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week and

were less likely to be overweight or obese than similar people living in low-walkability neighborhoods.⁵

ABOUT MINNESOTA'S NEW COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

- Defines in state law Complete Streets as "the planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities."
- Directs the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement a complete streets policy after consultation with stakeholders, state and regional agencies, local governments, and road authorities.
- Removes existing barriers to complete streets policies in relevant laws and regulations.
- Directs Mn/DOT to report back to the legislature on work to implement Complete Streets.
- Provides immediate design flexibility for local communities interested in implementing Complete Streets.
- The law also states that local road authorities are encouraged, but not required, to create and adopt complete streets policies for their roads that reflect local context and goals.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Trends in Leisure-Time Physical Inactivity by Age, Sex, and Race/Ethnicity — United States, 1994–2004." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 54(39): 991–994, October.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "US Physical Activity Statistics," <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/PASurveillance/StateSumResultV.asp>.

³ Addy C, Wilson D, Kirtland K, et al. "Associations of Perceived Social and Physical Environmental Supports with Physical Activity and Walking Behavior." *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(3): 440–443, March 2004.

⁴ Boehmer T, Hoehner C, Deshpande A, et al. "Perceived and Observed Neighborhood Indicators of Obesity among Urban Adults." *International Journal of Obesity*, 31(6): 968–977, June 2007.

⁵ Sallis, James F, et al. Neighborhood built environment and income: Examining multiple health outcomes. *Social Science and Medicine* 68(2009): 1285–1293.