Chapter 2: MAKING THE CASE

Benefits of Walking and Bicycling
Active transportation provides communities with a wide variety of benefits. These benefits include reduced traffic congestion, environmental benefits from reduced emissions, and increased health outcomes due to more people being physically active while providing other economic benefits.

In 2015, the Surgeon General released a Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities to make walking a national priority. Only one-half of U.S. adults and about one-quarter of high school students meet the minimum guidelines for physical activity. Regular physical activity can reduce the burden of chronic diseases and walking is one of the easiest ways for people to achieve a daily physical and active lifestyles. Communities can benefit from safe and convenient places to walk and walkable communities make it easier for people of all ages and abilities to be physically active. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has drawn connections between active transportation and a reduction in obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer, and pulmonary and cardiac diseases. The CDC has also documented the connection between improved air quality and the potential for reductions in adverse birth outcomes, asthma, diminished lung function, and cancer, all of which have been linked to exposure to traffic emissions.

Studies have also shown the economic benefits of active transportation. In 2017, the National Association of Realtors devoted their entire quarterly winter publication, On Common Ground, to the topic of walkability. This publication cites that “a clear majority of people – 60 percent – favor neighborhoods with a walkable mix of houses and stores” based on their most recent survey. This report also cites a recent study that analyzed 30 large metropolitan areas and concluded that, over the last five years, walkable urban locations have outperformed sprawling suburban locations in terms of rent premiums as well as retail and commercial properties sales. Walk Score is now commonly used as a real estate investment tool. A recent study that explores the connection between home values and walkability demonstrates that walkability improves housing values in almost all metropolitan markets.

Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition released a publication in 2015 called Safer Streets, Stronger Economies. This report reviewed over 35 complete streets projects from

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around the nation and found that about 70 percent of the complete streets projects experienced a reduction in collisions (in some cases a significant amount). Twelve of the thirteen projects that collected pedestrian counts showed an increase in walking trips, 22 out of 23 projects that collected bicycle counts showed an increase in bicycle trips, and of the seven that showed transit ridership information, six of those projects showed an increase in ridership.

VISION 2040 calls for reducing vehicle miles traveled by increasing alternatives to driving alone while the RTP calls for increasing travel choices. Increased walking and bicycling reduces the reliance on driving and therefore reduces emissions from automobiles. Improving pedestrian and bicycle “first and last mile” links to public transit increases access to the transit system and reduces vehicle congestion at transit stops and stations. Investing in active transportation provides a significant opportunity to leverage limited resources to produce multiple public health benefits and reduce health care spending.

Demonstrating the Need

The central Puget Sound region is experiencing tremendous growth and with that growth comes higher demands on the transportation system. When planning for active transportation facilities, transportation planners and traffic engineers consider not only current usage data, but also mode shift trends, latent and future demand.

According to a recent study, people between the ages of 16-34 have changed their travel behavior toward walking and bicycling. This chart represents the change in the number of trips per capita between 2001-2009 for these populations. The study also reported that the average number of miles driven by 16 to 34-year-olds dropped by 23 percent as a result of young people taking fewer trips, shorter trips, and a larger share of trips by modes other than driving. Young Americans drive less than older Americans and use public transportation more, and often use multiple modes of travel during a typical day or week, according to this study.

![Chart 1: Change in the number of trips per capita among 16 to 34-year-olds, 2001-2009](source)

The Regional Transportation Plan results in an increase in the percent of people walking and bicycling for transportation purposes. For the region as a whole, this rate is expected to grow by 14% by 2040 and for people with low-income, this rate is expected to grow by 26%.

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Today</th>
<th>2040</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People of Color</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Low Income</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Low Income</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>+26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percent of People walking and biking for transportation, Today vs. 2040

Despite the increased demand for active transportation options, there are currently barriers for people interested in walking and biking, including access, cost, safety, and mobility. A study20 conducted by Portland State University shows that 60% of respondents are interested in bicycling but have concerns, particularly about safety. This population is known as the “interested but concerned.”

Higher speeds increase the probability21 of a fatal or serious injury when a vehicle collides with a person walking or biking. Motor vehicle traffic crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death in the United States, and pedestrians represent 13% of these fatalities22.

In the central Puget Sound region, the number of fatalities and serious injuries for bicyclists and pedestrians has not seen a decrease in the trend as is the case with motor vehicles. The share of total fatalities and serious injuries for bicyclists and pedestrians is significantly higher in the central Puget Sound region than it is for Washington State overall, highlighting that travel safety for these users is a particularly important issue for this region. Non-motorized serious injuries and fatalities increased from 21% to 27% of the total between 2010 and 2016 in the central Puget Sound.

It is also important to note that when comparing the share of collisions to the share of total trips, the share of collisions exceeds the share of total trips made by pedestrians and bicyclists whereas the opposite is true for motor vehicle only crashes.

**Chart 2: 2015 Comparison - Mode Share to Crash Rates in central Puget Sound region**

![Chart](chart.png)

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Data: Means of Transportation to Work, 16 Years and Over and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data and WSDOT Serious Injuries

*Share of total trips includes the ‘other’ category from ACS to capture bicyclists.

Many pedestrian and bicycle crashes that involve pavement conditions, weather or other factors unrelated to an automobile are not included in crash data sets because this data is reported through police reports. The injury rate for pedestrians and bicyclists is likely higher due to these unreported incidences.

Because of the high correlation between vehicle speed and the severity of injuries for vulnerable users, the ATP emphasizes engineering strategies that separate people walking and bicycling from vehicles as much as possible. NOTE: WSDOT crash data records contain data from the Police Traffic Collision Reports (PTCRs), data derived from PTCR data (e.g., officer’s narrative and diagram), and data identified and included to support safety analysis and engineering. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission manages the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a census of all traffic-related fatalities occurring

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24 Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Data: Means of Transportation to Work, 16 Years and Over and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data and WSDOT Serious Injuries

Regional Transportation Plan
Appendix L: Active Transportation Plan
in Washington State. Because the crash data is derived from collision reports, these two terms are used interchangeably in this report.

Under 23 U.S. Code § 409, safety data, reports, surveys, schedules, lists compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential crash sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings are not subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data.