



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Fighting obesity and type 2 diabetes with more ways to stay active

- ❖ Increased physical activity is critical to both the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes. In past surveys, **60% of adults in North Carolina believe they would be more physically active** if their communities had more accessible sidewalks for walking or bicycling.
- ❖ New research from UNC-Chapel Hill shows that **biking and pedestrian projects save public dollars in the long run by lowering health care costs**, especially in rural and urban areas.
- ❖ **Complete Streets** is a national movement to convert existing neighborhood infrastructure into pedestrian and bike-friendly roadways. North Carolina's **Department of Transportation adopted a "Complete Streets" policy in 2009** and the Department's mission includes supporting the health of state residents.
- ❖ Keeping communities walkable is a smart economic choice that supports property values in addition to improving community health. In Charlotte, for example, an **increase in Walk Score (a measure from 0 to 100 on how easy it is to do various errands on foot) correlates with an increase in average house price.**

What is the current state of physical activity among North Carolinians?

Compared to the national average, residents of North Carolina are less likely to meet physical activity recommendations. In 2012, 39.9% of North Carolinians with diabetes reported doing no exercise in the past month, compared with only 23.1% of adults without diabetes.

*Check out physical activity infrastructure in the **North Carolina PATHS Report:** pp. 83-85.*

What are the benefits of increased physical activity?

Physical activity not only helps prevent the incidence of type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases, but also mitigates the consequences of type 2 diabetes once individuals are diagnosed with the disease. Improving the built environment by developing communities that are walkable and bikable can assist individuals in increasing their physical activity; it makes "the healthy choice the easy choice."

What should North Carolina do?

1. North Carolina can **make the community health impact of proposed transportation projects a required part of decision-making** with respect to transportation project funding.
2. The state can **collect more data on pedestrian and cycling activity** to aid researchers in more fully understanding the role of the built environment in public health and diabetes prevention.
3. The state can encourage **municipalities to require new subdivisions to construct sidewalks and bike accommodations in all new development.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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