

Better Understanding the Connection Between Mobility Options and Public Health

When considering the greater value access to transit provides a community, new momentum is building to fully articulate the ultimate benefit of livable communities: the value of saving lives. As part of a comprehensive, intentional strategy that includes walking, biking and land-use elements, transit service provides enormous value in improving individual and collective health.

Earlier this year, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation published a thorough infographic titled, *Better Transportation Options = Healthier Lives*. This visually-appealing and well-researched document concisely outlines the linkages between improved mobility options and public health. The infographic is republished here in its entirety with permission from NewPublicHealth.org, the public health news and information forum from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



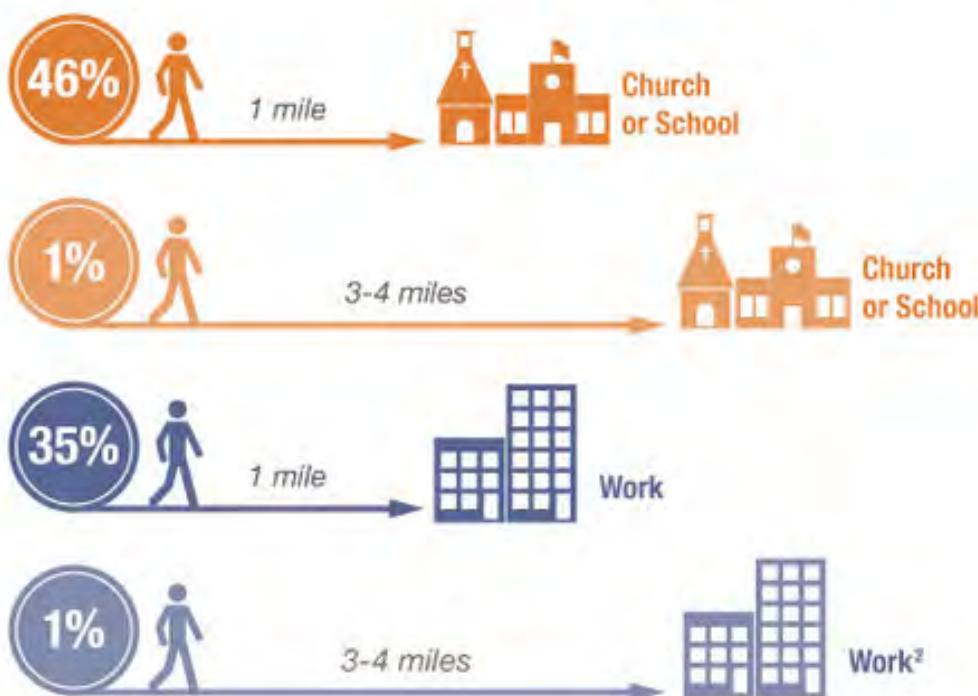
Walkable, bikable, transit-oriented communities are associated with healthier populations that have:



PUBLIC TRANSIT GETS PEOPLE MOVING TOO:



STUDIES SHOW PEOPLE WILL WALK TO DESTINATIONS:



LEVELS OF CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT USE HAVE REACHED RECORD HIGHS IN THE U.S.





60% OF U.S.
PUBLIC TRANSPORT
TRIPS ARE BY
BUS



**BUS
BIKE RACKS**
ARE INEXPENSIVE
AND EXPAND
ACCESS



% OF U.S. BUSES
WITH BIKE RACKS
TRIPLED
FROM
2000 to 2006⁴

Countries with **LOWER** rates of obesity tend to have **HIGHER** rates of commuters who walk or bike to work⁵

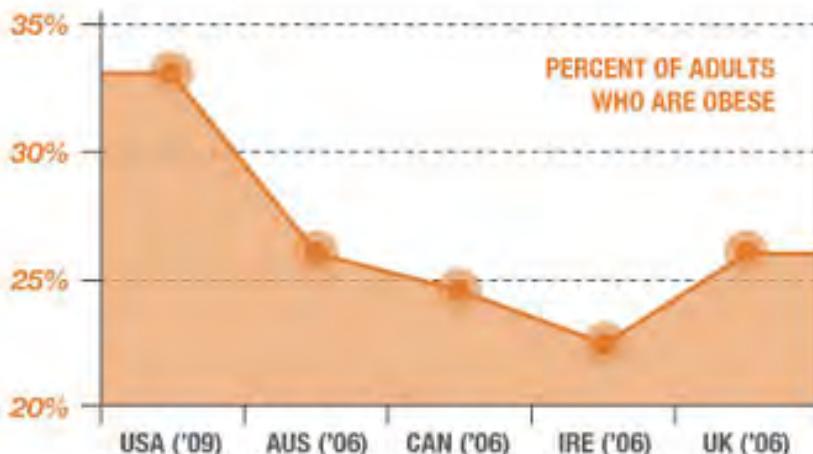
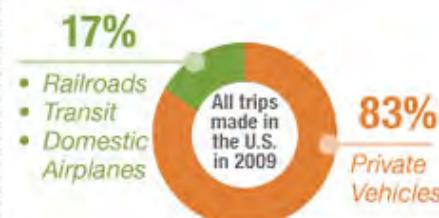


ACTIVE COMMUTING AND OBESITY RATES BY COUNTRY



SPRAWL, LONG COMMUTES COST SOCIETY

Communities are becoming more spread out, leading to more time spent in cars



TRANSIT ORIENTED COMMUNITIES CONNECT PEOPLE TO OPPORTUNITIES

TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES CONNECT PEOPLE TO:



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



JOB(S)

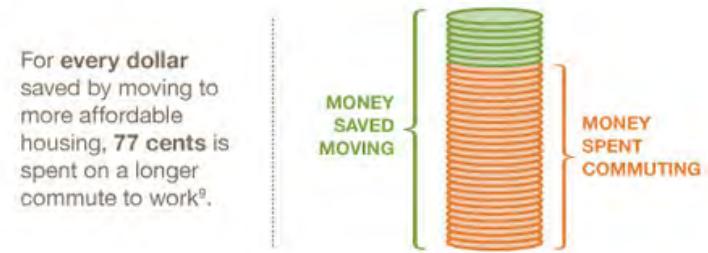


EDUCATION



HEALTH CARE

For every dollar saved by moving to more affordable housing, 77 cents is spent on a longer commute to work⁹.

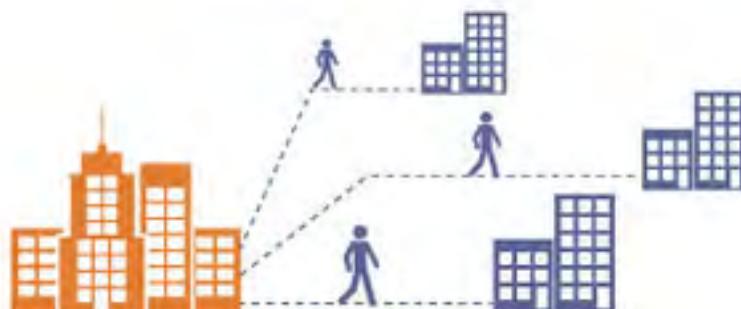


TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS COST LIVES, MONEY



30,196
people
DIED
in 2010
in car wrecks

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for ages 5-24



75% of all jobs
are located
outside
city centers⁸

THE TOTAL ANNUAL COST OF CRASHES IN
THE NATION'S URBANIZED AREAS:
\$99,000,000,000.00¹¹

Small policy changes can save lives:



Increasing seat belt usage to 90% would save an extra \$5.2 billion in medical, legal and productivity costs.



A \$30 booster seat for child passengers produces a cost savings greater than 9 to 1.



The public saves \$3-\$7 for every \$1 spent on ignition locking devices that prevent alcohol-impaired drivers from operating a vehicle.

Smarter laws and policies can help prevent motor vehicle injury and death

**strong
SEATBELT
policy and
CHILD SAFETY
legislation**

25% decrease in car accident deaths since 2005¹²

Corresponding with the Better Transportation Options = Healthier Lives infographic is an Issue Brief published by the Robert Wood Foundation as part of its Health Policy Snapshot series. This Issue Brief provides additional background research and web links on the connection between mobility options and public health. Click on the image of the Issue Brief to download the document. CT

Health Policy Snapshot
Public Health and Prevention

ISSUE BRIEF
October 2012

www.rwjf.org/healthispolicy

How Does Transportation Impact Health?

Takeways:

- Transportation is one of the economic and social factors that influences people's health and the health of a community.
- The health costs associated with traffic crashes, air pollution, and physical inactivity add up to hundreds of billions of dollars each year, but health is typically not considered in transportation policy and planning.
- The National Prevention Strategy and Action Plan call for transportation agencies to play a part through encouraging the development of livable, walkable communities, bike lanes, and other healthy transit options.

Overview

The U.S. transportation system can be harmful to our health, but it doesn't need to be. While motorized transportation modes still dominate—leading to increased air pollution, traffic crashes, and decreased physical activity—opportunities abound to increase alternative transportation options that support walking and cycling and improve health.

CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM BODIES ILL FOR HEALTH

The U.S. transportation system is a web of highways, bridges, roads, sidewalks, bike paths, trains, and buses that move people to each other and to places where they work, learn, play, shop, and get medical care. While this system has increased mobility and access to goods and services, it relies predominantly

on motorized transportation—and that has consequences for health.

Currently, the vast majority of Americans' workers drive solo in a car to work. Forty percent of all trips in America are two miles or less, 74 percent of which are traveled by car.² In 2008, the average American drove nearly 10,000 miles,³ with sprawl necessitating longer commutes. This dependence on driving leads to 40,000 traffic-related deaths annually⁴ and exposes us to air pollution. Some 35 million people live within 300 feet of a major road, putting them at higher risk for asthma and other respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, pre-term births, and premature death.

Our current transportation system also contributes to physical inactivity—each additional hour spent in a car per day is associated with a 6 percent increase in the likelihood of obesity. Conversely, each added kilometer walked per day is associated with a nearly 3 percent reduction in obesity.⁵ Regular physical activity promotes health and lowers risk for obesity and premature death.

HEALTH IMPACT NOT OFTEN CONSIDERED IN TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The direct health impacts associated with traffic crashes, air pollution and physical inactivity amount to hundreds of billions of dollars annually. These health costs typically are not included in transportation decision-making and policy. Currently 80 percent of federal transportation funding goes to building highways and improving road infrastructures,⁶ which limits opportunities for active, healthier transportation options, such as public

1 | Copyright 2012 | Robert Wood Johnson Foundation | www.rwjf.org | October 2012

LIVES SAVED

**1975
to
2008**



255,000

seatbelts



8,959

**child safety seats,
booster seats, and
seat belts¹³**