

Health in All Policies: Transportation Current Practice and Future Opportunities

Health in All Policies recognizes that health is determined not only by genetics, health care, and individual behaviors but by a complex set of social, economic and environmental factors. This document highlights current action and potential future opportunities to integrate health and health equity into budgetary, programmatic, and policy decision-making in the transportation sector.

Why This Matters

A connected network of adequate, safe, and accessible transportation options is essential for people of all ages and abilities to access goods and services, including education, jobs, food, health and dental care, recreation and social opportunities. Local, regional, and state policies that ensure all modes of transportation are included in all transportation and development projects will support good health.

Sector: Transportation

Through excellent customer service, the Vermont Agency of Transportation provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Its vision is a safe, reliable and multimodal transportation system that grows the economy, is affordable to use and operate, and serves vulnerable populations.

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Budget

Physical Activity

Current Practice

- ▶ Consider state, regional and municipal identified priorities for making planning, design and operations decisions. One resource consulted is the prioritized bicycle network map from the On-Road Bicycle Facility Plan. Investments are prioritized within grant programs such as the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure investments that make walking and biking safer and more convenient.
- ▶ Vermont statutory language clarifies that highway funds may be used for bicycle and pedestrian facilities; by flexing funds, increased investments in public transportation and bicycle-pedestrian improvements support active transportation.
- ▶ Target infrastructure investments that support biking and walking in designated downtowns and village centers while also using the On Road Bicycle Facility Plan to prioritize investments to improve road shoulders.

Air Quality

Current Practice

- ▶ Encourage funding and policy decisions that strengthen public transportation, congestion relief, air quality improvements, and non-motorized and rail travel through the Agency budget and other Agency actions.
- ▶ Support the development of cleaner bus and truck fleets and invest in freight rail infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health through reductions in local air pollution, and foster energy independence.
- ▶ Provide incentives for motor vehicle drivers to purchase vehicles with technologies designed to control pollution and reduce emissions.

Safety

Current Practice

- ▶ Develop and implement design guidance to provide safe facilities for all transportation users that all grant recipients must follow. Provide technical

assistance both internal and external to the Agency to advance these standards. VTrans offers trainings on bike/ped design and the Americans with Disabilities Act standards and design applications.

- ▶ Develop a five-year Strategic Highway Safety Plan using a data driven process to identify Critical Emphasis Areas and safety needs for the State and prioritize the allocation of funds. Identify strategies for implementation that have the most potential to save lives and prevent injuries.
- ▶ Continue safety investments and ensure occupant protection strategies and roadway and community design modifications promote the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and passengers.

Equitable Access

Current Practice

- ▶ Emphasize projects that will revitalize the economy of struggling communities, lower health disparities, and connect vulnerable populations to jobs, business opportunities, healthy food outlets, medical services, and other necessities.
- ▶ Emphasize accessibility as well as mobility, in transportation policies and programs.
- ▶ Provide Mobility and Transportation Innovation grants to explore strategies that increase access to employment and educational opportunities for rural communities.
- ▶ Provide funding through Better Connections program to communities outside of the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization's geographic region to provide equitable transportation planning opportunities at a municipal level.

Future Opportunities

- ▶ Implement criteria in grant evaluation processes to prioritize transportation investments in areas with low incomes, high unemployment and poverty rates, and communities of color, to stimulate economic growth and provide access to jobs.
- ▶ Ensure transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation by residents, advocates with diverse interests, and experts from different fields. Engage new partners in decision making and provide training, data and resources to allow fully informed participation by the people affected most by decisions and investments.
- ▶ Encourage and appropriately fund equitable transit-oriented development by considering the creation of incentives for integrated land use and transportation planning.

Policy

Physical Activity

Current Practice

- ▶ Collaborate with the Department of Health and Agency of Commerce and Community Development on land use and active transportation issues.
- ▶ Through VTrans' relationship with the Regional Planning Commissions, as defined by the Transportation Planning Initiative work program each year, VTrans works on land use and transportation policies at the local and regional level that encourage transit-oriented developments and other mixed-use developments, and increase connectivity among neighborhoods and communities for all transportation modes.
- ▶ Through the Transportation Planning Initiative and participation in the State Comprehensive Energy Plan and Vermont Climate Action Plan, VTrans supports policies that reduce vehicle miles traveled per capita, including land use policies that reduce vehicular travel, increase public transportation utilization, increase use of park and ride facilities and increase the availability of active transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and bicycling infrastructure.

Air Quality

Current Practice

- ▶ Consider measures to enable state, regional and local planners to protect residents from local air and noise pollution from high-volume roadways and airports by discouraging new development, including public facilities investments, near these air and noise pollution sources. Consider constructing barriers to reduce nearby residents' exposure to noise pollution, paying particular attention to low-income communities and communities of color.
- ▶ Implement policies that reduce environmental pollution caused by transportation by migrating to renewable transportation energy sources.

Safety

Current Practice

- ▶ Support the use of roadside drug detection technologies as an additional tool to deter and detect drug impaired drivers as well as expanding the use of ignition interlock devices and increasing offender accountability and rehabilitation requirements for DWI alcohol offenders.
- ▶ Consider Vermont laws relating to the rights and responsibilities of vulnerable road users to ensure continued applicability to current and future modes of transport (electric and non-electric).
- ▶ Implement and promote educational programs for bicyclists about proper equipment and riding safely in traffic and work to improve public understanding of what constitutes an appropriate and USDOT-compliant motorcycle or bicycle helmet.
- ▶ Improve coordination between stakeholders to enhance enforcement of distracted driving laws and penalties, including texting while driving.

Equitable Access

Current Practice

- ▶ Consider giving state, regional, and local governments more flexibility to move transportation program investments among funding categories to target spending to local transportation needs which address equitable access to transportation services.

Future Opportunities

- ▶ Create incentives and accountability measures to ensure that state, regional and local transportation plans account for impacts on health, safety, and equity of all community members, including people with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, low-income communities, and communities of color. Follow the requirements and best practices in Act 154, Vermont's Environmental Justice law.
- ▶ In the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, 2021, Congress added a requirement that State highway safety programs result from meaningful public participation and engagement from affected communities, particularly those most significantly impacted by traffic crashes resulting in injuries and fatalities. The VTrans Safe Systems Unit is working to establish equity criteria in the project prioritization process to fund underserved regions and overrepresented populations.

Program

Physical Activity

Current Practice

- ▶ Consider investments which create dense networks of connected streets that serve the needs of all transportation modes using “complete streets” design guidelines.
 - ▶ Design streets considering the context of the road and surrounding land development. Incorporate appropriate levels of active transportation infrastructure to reduce motor vehicle speeds and minimize pedestrian and bicycle injuries throughout towns and cities.
 - ▶ Promote the Vermont Better Connections Program to provide funding for the planning of community level multimodal projects which can lead to increased implementation of active-transportation infrastructure.
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Air Quality

Current Practice

- ▶ Provide incentives via the Go Vermont program that reduce vehicle miles of travel per capita and implement active living environments that promote walking and bicycling, using public transit, and reducing air pollution.
 - ▶ Provide bicycle storage at public transportation stations, bus stops, city car-share point-of-departure locations, and all state office buildings.
 - ▶ Retrofit existing diesel vehicles with current pollution control measures to reduce emissions.
 - ▶ Require inspection and maintenance programs for medium and heavy-duty vehicles to assure air emissions requirements are met.
 - ▶ Promote bike-share programs in areas where density indicates a likelihood of program success and promote the implementation of protected bike lanes in high density travel areas in accordance with design and contextual standards.
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Safety

Current Practice

- ▶ Enhance seat belt enforcement programs.
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- ▶ Implement safety initiatives in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan to strengthen and enforce traffic policies that will lead to reduced injury and death of motor vehicle drivers, passengers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Agency previously worked with the VT Highway Safety Alliance to deliver curriculum at the VT Police Academy to reinforce knowledge of existing laws around how motorists interact with bicyclists and pedestrians.
- ▶ Facilitate a Safe Routes to School Program by maintaining a central resource portal and coordination of educational programs implemented by state, regional, local and non-profit organization partners. Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects continue to be supported by the Transportation Alternatives and Bicycle and Pedestrian grant programs.
- ▶ Improve public awareness of impaired driving and its associated dangers while promoting programs for consistent education for individuals and organizations charged with addressing impairment issues and continuing to train law enforcement officers to help them detect incidents of Driving While Impaired.
- ▶ Use context sensitive design standards which include bicycling and walking infrastructure while mitigating potential adverse effects of motor vehicles utilizing a “Complete Streets” design philosophy.
- ▶ Reduce barriers to access for all populations regardless of income or car ownership to obtain subsidized car seats and bicycle helmets.

Equitable Access

Current Practice

- ▶ Support transportation services for areas with low population densities using a mix of publicly funded, private enterprise, volunteer-based demand response, on-demand public transit and scheduled transportation services to meet basic needs and support local work forces.

Future Opportunities

- ▶ Concentrate greenways, bikeways, and sidewalks in areas with high rates of health disparities and chronic disease, especially in low-income communities, environmentally burdened communities, and communities of color.
- ▶ Ensure that communications regarding transportation plans, projects and programs are available to all Vermonters through translation, written and verbal messaging, and braille and ensure that VTrans staff receives training in communicating with people with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency. Follow Act 154 requirements and best practices guiding these activities.