Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Promoting Active Transportation in Rural Areas

Active Living Research & Dialogue4Health Webinar

April 24, 2012 @ 3:30 PM EDT
A Roundtable Discussion

- Jen Rice – Humboldt Area Foundation (CA)
- Eric Oberg – Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (OH)
- Ronald Cossman – Starkville in Motion (MS)
- Mark Duncan – Starkville in Motion (MS)

Facilitator: Tracy Hadden Loh, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (DC)
What do you see here?
Everyone Agrees in Principle...

But Then You Hit Barriers
What do these barriers really represent?
What is it about sidewalks?

Transportation Commission Report: MSU buses could extend to city, sidewalk ordinance variance proposed

February 22, 2011
BY STEVEN NALLEY
Starkville Daily News

Mississippi State University is exploring options to expand its University Shuttle system into the city of Starkville once again, according to the Starkville Transportation Committee's 2010 annual report released on Feb. 15. The report summarizes the committee's discussions, decisions, actions, and recommendations over the past year. Topics covered include bicycle lanes, sidewalks, utilities, coordination, proposal creation and public transit.

The report says the committee has worked with MSU transportation coordinator Mike Harris to investigate funding the expansion through grants such as the TIGER II proposal and 5311 funds from MDOT. However, Harris said the University still needs to partner with a regional transit authority and hold public hearings on the project, so the
Bicycle & Foot Route [Concept from Downtown Hoopa to the Schools]

Current Situation

Option A
Sidewalk, curb with bike lane adjacent to Highway 96

Option B
Paved path, no curb, separated from Highway 96

Option C
Paved multi-use path, no curb, separated from Highway 96

Pros:
- Consistent with downtown design, curb barrier to traffic
- Not separated from highway, not appealing for cyclists or pedestrians
- Not wide enough for multi-use use, need bridge over Supply Creek
- Cost estimate likely lowest cost

Cons:
- Not complete
- Cost not appealing for pedestrians, cyclists or equestrians
- Cost estimate likely highest cost
What does ‘complete streets’ look like in a non-metropolitan context?

Willow Creek, SR 299: Before

After: achieving many objectives

Photos: Caltrans Dist. 1
Who needs educating?

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
By: Senator(s) King, Hewes, Dearing

REGULAR SESSION 2010
To: Highways and Transportation

SENATE BILL NO. 3014
(As Passed the Senate)

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THOSE PERSONS
2 OPERATING BICYCLES ON ANY ROADWAY OR HIGHWAY OR PATH SET ASIDE FOR
3 BICYCLES; TO SET FORTH THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE OPERATOR OF A
4 MOTOR VEHICLE WITH RESPECT TO BICYCLES; TO PROHIBIT CERTAIN
5 ACTIVITIES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Sections 1 through 7 of this act shall be known
and may cited as the "John Paul Frerer Bicycle Safety Act."

SECTION 2. (1) Sections 1 through 7 of this act apply to
bicycles whenever they are operated upon any roadway or highway,
or upon any path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

(2) A person riding a bicycle upon a roadway has all of the
rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to the
driver of a vehicle, except as may be otherwise provided in
Sections 1 through 7 of this act.

SECTION 3. (1) For purposes of this section, "bicycle lane"
means a portion of the roadway or a lane separated from the
Physical Inactivity is the Fourth Highest Mortality Risk Factor for Men and Women

How does this resonate in your community?
What comes to mind about how transportation/land use planning processes produce these results?

What are some decisionmaking processes that lead to transportation insecurity?

What are ways decisionmakers can use better information to help change this outcome?
How do we resolve the conflict between the need for standards and not wanting to be generic?
What’s the role of the state DOT?
Why has Safe Routes to School (SRtS) been so potent in the rural context?
Is there a justice element in this?
How does the town/gown dynamic play out in active transportation?
What special opportunities are there in rural areas to promote walking and biking?
What inspires you?

BILLINGS, MONTANA IS RANKED:

- #1 small city to launch a business (Fortune Magazine 2009)
- 3rd best place to raise a family (Best Life Magazine)
- #6 for best 2011 business tax climate (The Tax Foundation 2010)
- 1 of 8 best cities for new careers (Where to Retire Magazine 2009)
- Located near Yellowstone National Park, Little Bighorn Battlefield, site of Custer’s Last Stand
What’s the secret to success?
Resources, Models, Tools

• “Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers”
• Active Living Research
• Humboldt County RTAP
• RALA
• PATH Guide
• Health Impact Assessment
• Others?
Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers

Walking and Bicycling in Small Towns and Rural America
June 10, 2011

The Honorable Robert Casey, Jr.
840 Hamilton Street, Suite 301
Allentown, PA 18101

Dear Senator Casey:

We are writing to you today regarding significant issues with extraordinarily wasteful federal funding that are impacting our district and many rural municipalities throughout Pennsylvania. We have heard from numerous constituents regarding their concerns over wasteful spending with federal funds for transportation projects.

Recently, we held a town hall meeting in Blandon, Maiden Creek Township, Berks County, and the number one taxpayer complaint was ongoing curb cuts renovations occurring on, quite literally, “sidewalks to nowhere.” When our offices contacted Pennsylvania’s Department of Transportation regarding this issue, we were informed that while these curbs and sidewalks are paid through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the County Maintenance Budget for each PennDOT district across the Commonwealth will be held responsible for the maintenance in the future. We understand the need for accessible sidewalks, but we should not be building sidewalks in rural communities with no pedestrian traffic.
Executive Summary

• Federal investment in biking and walking benefits rural areas as much or more than urban centers.

• Active transportation programs directly benefit America’s youth, and thus can help rural areas to attract and retain talented young people and families.

• Active transportation is a smart investment relevant to all Americans at a time when our nation grapples with budget deficits, a stagnant economy, stubbornly high unemployment, and rising energy costs.
All Small Communities Don’t Fit in the Same Box

As a means of comparison, the urban categories in the adapted version of RUCA classifications are as follows:

- **Large Rural Core** Towns of 10,000 to 50,000, often regional centers.
- **Outer Large Rural** Smaller communities from which many people travel to Large Rural Core towns for work, shopping, services or school.
- **Small Rural Core** Towns of 2,500 to 10,000, often county seats.
- **Outer Small Rural** Smaller communities from which many travel to Small Rural Core towns for work, shopping, services or school.
- **Isolated Rural** Communities without strong economic and social links to a town of more than 2,500.

In this typology, 81% of US acreage and 20% of US population falls into rural categories. See page 25 for a full breakdown of how the people and land area of the United States are distributed in this typology.
Share of Total Trips Made on Foot and Bike
Across 5 Types of Rural Communities

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Share of Work Trips Made by Walking and Biking
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Data Source: 2009 National Household Travel Survey / nhts.ornl.gov

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Move Over, San Francisco
Eight Regions Led by Small Cities Are Among the Nation’s Leaders in Driving Less

According to a recent *Atlantic* article by noted economic analyst Richard Florida, more than half of the top 15 metropolitan regions where people drive the least are cities with fewer than 150,000 residents. Often college and military towns, these communities confirm that biking and walking are not exclusively a big-city habit.

The data also confirm that communities wishing to attract more young people should offer a variety of transportation options, not just driving. The figures below are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (2009 1-year estimates) of how people travel to work. The totals are for the entire designated metropolitan region, not just the center city. (Besides biking and walking, the non-driving figures also include public transportation and shuttle services.)

### Top 15 Metropolitan Statistical Areas for Non-Driving Commuters—Share of Trips by Mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Walking</th>
<th>Biking</th>
<th>Total*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. New York City</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ithaca, N.Y. (Pop. 30,000)</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Boulder, Colo. (Pop. 94,000)</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. San Francisco Bay Area</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Jacksonville, N.C. (Pop. 80,500)</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Boston</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
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<td>7. Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
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<td>8. Champaign-Urbana, Ill. (Pop. 81,000 &amp; 41,000)</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
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<td>9. Eugene, Ore. (Pop. 156,000)</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Chicago</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Honolulu</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Seattle</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Santa Barbara, Calif. (Pop. 88,000)</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Iowa City, Iowa (Pop. 67,830)</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Bellingham, Wash. (Pop. 81,000)</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population totals are for city centers. Trip rates are for metropolitan areas.

*Total non-driving rate includes transit.
Rural Americans Value Sidewalks and Bike Lanes, According to Federal Study

More Than 9 Out of 10 Rank Sidewalks Important, and Nearly 3 Out of 4 Value Bike Lanes

The importance of walking and biking for rural Americans is underscored by a recent study by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Research and Innovation Technology Administration.

Rural Americans ranked sidewalks the most important of eight transportation-related facilities, ahead of major roads, long-distance transportation and parking. Almost nine in 10 also cited the importance of pedestrian-friendly communities, and nearly three out of four reported that bike lanes are important.

The data are from the 2009 US DOT Omnibus Household Survey conducted by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.\(^\text{55}\)
Places
Crystal River, FL
Alpine, UT
Sheboygan, WI
Billings, MT
Olmstead County, MN
Burlington, WY
Ottawa, IL
Pottstown, PA
New Freedom, PA
Lanesboro, MN
Diller/Deshler/Exeter/Wilber/Wymore/Crete, NE
Cape Girardeau, MO
Mooresville, NC
Tupelo, MS
Hernando, MS
Red Wing, MN

Programs
Safe Routes to School
Transportation Enhancements
Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program
Communities Putting Prevention to Work
Complete Streets
www.railstotrails.org/beyondurbancenters
Please visit: www.activelivingresearch.org

– Research briefs and syntheses

– Results summary slides

– Conference presentations

– Free access to journals

– Sign up for ALR newsletter and other announcements
A model: Humboldt County RTAP

- Rural Transportation & Access Partnership (RTAP)

- The Rural Transportation Access & Partnership (RTAP) can help rural, unincorporated communities overcome transportation challenges. RTAP is a matching program offered through Humboldt County Department of Public Works to help address unfunded transportation needs through community partnership.

- http://co.humboldt.ca.us/pubworks/rtap.asp
The Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) Tools

Author: David Hanley, Ph.D., Anush Yousefian, M.S., Renee Umstattd, Ph.D., Jeffrey Hallam, Ph.D., Christina Economos, Ph.D., Raymond Hyatt, Ph.D., & Erin Hennessy, M.P.H.
Contact Person: David Hanley, Ph.D.
Topic: Transportation, Roads and Streets, Parks and Recreation, Recreation Programs, Communities, Rural
Population Served: Unspecified
Location by State: National
Study Type: Measures

SUMMARY:

The RALA Tools assess the physical environment features and amenities, town characteristics, community programs, and policies that can affect physical activity among residents in rural communities. This tool is suitable for both practitioners and researchers.
Tools: RALA

• A way to assess rural environments
• What is it about rural environments that support or impede active transportation?
• 3 tools:
  – Town characteristics (parks, other rec amenities)
  – Programs/policies
  – Streets (segment characteristics)
• A tool for practitioners
  – Validated, tested, reliable

Also: http://humpal.org/program-areas/build-healthy-environment/hdcl
Tools: PATH Guide, GIS

GIS: Data by Census Block Group to estimate ‘transport disadvantage’

- Carless Households: 9%  
  – (High of 38%)
- Low Income: 20% (91%)
- Youth: 20% (39%)
- Seniors: 13% (34%)
- Minorities: 18% (90%)
- Physical or Mental Disability: 19% (41%)
- Unmapped...

Geographic Isolation: 20%  

www.naturalresourceservices.org/hrr2.html
Tools: Health Impact Assessment

• Applied to the Humboldt County General Plan Update in 2009
• http://humpal.org/program-areas/build-healthy-environment/HIA