



Sandusky County

Sandusky County Rolls toward Active Transportation

Summary

Active modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling allow individuals to integrate physical activity into their daily routines. However, not all communities have the infrastructure or practices in place to support these users. From closing the streets off for a day to allow the community to engage in healthy physical activity for “Street Play Saturday” to initiating a county-wide active transportation plan, the Sandusky County Creating Healthy (CHC) Communities Program has taken several steps towards making active transportation safe, convenient, and viable for residents.

Challenge

Regular physical activity can reduce the burden of chronic disease. Despite the known benefits of being physically active, only 52 percent of Sandusky

County adults and 30 percent of youth are meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines¹. There are multiple barriers to being physically active in Sandusky County, including lack of time, lack of social support, and limited access to affordable and safe places to engage in physical activity. According to Federal Highway Data, 43 percent of all vehicle trips are for distances of three miles or less². Thus, there is a huge opportunity to increase physical activity by engaging in active modes of transportation, such as walking or biking. However, the proper infrastructure and practices need to be in place to support these active modes of travel. The Sandusky County CHC Program identified the need for active transportation support after administering a bicycle education survey. This survey found that one in three residents did not know bicyclists should ride with the flow of traffic.

Solution

Sandusky County CHC program implemented a “Share the Road” campaign to encourage active modes of transportation, educating both drivers and bicyclists on the rules of the road. In addition to this campaign, CHC partnered with the City of Fremont to improve bicycle infrastructure throughout priority neighborhoods by installing road signs that read, “Bikes May Use Full Lane.” This opened the door to then launch Northwest Ohio’s first open streets initiative called, “Street Play Saturday.” Street Play Saturday consisted of temporarily closing the streets to vehicle traffic and transforming them into a giant street park, allowing residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to engage in activities that improve their health.



Results

Street Play Saturday closed nearly one mile of the city's streets to provide free activities that were fun, educational and promoted social interaction. Participants were able to engage in a variety of physical activities including pickle ball, a youth obstacle course, riding bikes in the street, and learning about bike safety. Results from a survey administered throughout the event indicated that the average participant spent more than 70 minutes engaging in physical activities. This initiative led residents to begin thinking about alternative modes of transportation, with 95 percent of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that Street Play Saturday has encouraged them to support active transportation.

In addition to the 15 new bicycle signs obtained with CHC funding, the City of Fremont supported active transportation by designating a bike lane along the main street in the historic downtown district. Both of these improvements helped to increase awareness and eliminate barriers to engaging in active transportation and physical activity.

"The new bike signs and designated bike lane have made me feel more comfortable sharing the road with drivers. These additions have also been really helpful in keeping bikes off the sidewalk and on the road where drivers can see them more clearly."

— Mary Boda, Fremont resident

Sustaining Success

Following the active transportation initiatives carried out by the CHC program, several local engineers, city planners, law enforcement, elected officials, municipal decision makers, and other community leaders participated in a professional development ride hosted by "Yay Bikes!", a bicycle advocacy group out of Columbus, Ohio. This experience gave these professionals a clearer understanding of how they can better accommodate people who bicycle for transportation. This training then led to discussions initiating the development of an active transportation plan and policies that support Complete Streets. Sandusky County CHC is also planning two additional open streets initiatives, which will be integrated into the 2017 Downtown Fremont farmers markets.

Your Involvement is Key

You can help make walking and bicycling safe, convenient, and viable for residents of all ages and abilities by:

- Follow "Street Play Saturday" on Facebook to learn the safety guideline for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians www.facebook.com/streetplaysaturday.
- Getting on the road by joining a local bike group and learn the rules of the road.
- Joining the Sandusky County CHC Coalition! Learn more about Sandusky County CHC by visiting us at <http://www.alwayschoosehealth.com/health-planning--chc>.
- Follow the statewide Your Move Initiative at <http://www.facebook.com/yourmoveohio>.

References

¹Sandusky County Community Health Status Assessment, 2013

²Federal Highway Administration. 2009 National Household Travel Survey. <http://nhts.ornl.gov/>



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