

Guide to Activating Rural America through Active Living Policies

April 2021

Insights from Communities
Creating Access to Places
for Physical Activity



Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
GUIDE DEVELOPMENT	
WHO SHOULD USE THIS RESOURCE?	
REASONS WHY AND HOW RURAL COMMUNITIES BEGAN THIS WORK.....	3
BENEFITS	5
SUSTAINABILITY	6
FUNDING SUPPORT	8
Funding Sources	
Funding Uses	9
BARRIERS.....	10
ADVICE FROM COMMUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED.....	11
General Advice	
For Implementors	12
For Decision Makers	
For Advocates	13
For National Level Organizations	
 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING.....	14
Small Town Advocate Turns Planning into Action.....	15
Community Profile: Ennis, Montana	
Community Leader engages Public Health to Get Community Moving!	17
Community Profile: Hebron, Nebraska	
Community Paves its Way to a New Trail and a Healthier Future	19
Community Profile: Rutherford County, North Carolina	
 COMPLETE STREETS	21
Leveraging Programming, Education, and Advocacy to Create Complete Streets.....	22
Community Profile: Beckley, West Virginia	
Complete Streets Result from Local Economic and Transportation	
Planning and Support from a Statewide Advocacy Organization	24
Community Profile: Osceola, Missouri	
State Funding and Local University Partnership Spell Success for Complete Streets	26
Community Profile: Potsdam, New York	
Leveraging a Trail to Build a Stronger Economy	28
Community Profile: Ruston, Louisiana	
Using Public Engagement to Overcome Complete Streets Misconceptions	30
Community Profile: Sequim, Washington	
Local Extension Agent and Youth Advocates Lead the Charge in Complete Streets	
Coalition Building!	32
Community Profile: Tallulah, Louisiana	
 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL.....	34
Local Trail Paves Way to Public Health Success with Safe Routes to School	35
Community Profile: Cannon Falls, Minnesota	
School and City Leaders Collaborate to Create Safe Routes to School.....	37
Community Profile: Hildale, Utah	
Community Partners with Cherokee Nation to Increase Safe Routes to School and	
Decrease Health Disparities	39
Community Profile: Stilwell, Oklahoma	
REFERENCES	41

Letter from the Authors

The *Guide to Activating Rural America through Active Living Policies* provides insights from rural communities across the country that are working to adopt and implement active living policies, including *bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure funding*, *Complete Streets*, and *Safe Routes to School*. These policy approaches have demonstrated promise in increasing physical activity across the U.S., but many resources and examples are focused on urban environments and do not address some of the unique attributes of rural communities. This guide was developed to explore how these initiatives can be adapted, translated, and implemented for rural communities. We highlight examples from key informant interviews with communities currently working in these active living policy areas, including how they got started, barriers they face, and how their efforts are funded. We also share their advice and summarize overall lessons learned for advocates, decision makers, and implementers. We hope that you will use this guide to inform your work and promote policies and design that will make it safer for everyone to walk, bike, and roll in your community.

This guide was made possible with funding awarded to the Physical Activity Research Center (PARC) through an Innovation, Equity, and Exploration grant from Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association. The purpose of our project was to create an Activating Rural America Workgroup and an Advisory Board to explore current initiatives addressing active living-related policies within a rural context. The Workgroup and Advisory Board were comprised of a diverse interdisciplinary team of researchers, policy makers, advocates, leaders, and residents in diverse areas of rural America engaged in promoting and encouraging active living. We thank the members of these groups, as well as the leaders and advocates we interviewed, for sharing their experience implementing active living policies, which informed the development of this guide. We also thank the following members of our project leadership and guide design teams: Christina Bridges Hamilton, Michelle Pennington, Tyler Prochnow, Rebekah Summerall, and Amanda Walker.

Keep on Moving,



M. Renée Umstattd Meyer

M. Renée Umstattd Meyer
Associate Dean for Research, Professor
Robbins College of Health and Human Sciences
Baylor University
Renee_Umstattd@baylor.edu



Baylor University



Christiaan Abildso

Christiaan Abildso
Associate Professor
School of Public Health
West Virginia University
cgabildso@hsc.wvu.edu



West Virginia University

Acknowledgment

This project was funded by Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association.

About Voices for Healthy Kids

Voices for Healthy Kids works around the country to improve or create equitable policies that will make the places kids, live, learn, and play healthier. For more information go to <https://voicesforhealthykids.org/>.



About the Physical Activity Research Center

The Physical Activity Research Center (PARC) is a collaboration of six leading universities building the evidence base for policy changes and practices that will help make physical activity part of everyday life for all children. For more information and resources go to <https://paresearchcenter.org/>.



Introduction

People are more likely to be physically active when their neighborhood has combined different approaches to make activity easier, such as creating access to a park and walking and biking paths¹. However, current physical activity research is predominantly derived from urban or suburban contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding what works in creating places that support physical activity in rural communities. Rural communities are unique, and evidence derived in urban contexts cannot simply be “scaled down” and expected to work in rural communities, although this evidence should be considered in context and not ignored. Efforts are needed to identify policies proven effective for people in urban and suburban settings and to examine if and/or how these initiatives can be adapted, translated, and implemented for rural populations².

Guide Development

This guide explores how rural communities across the country are addressing, tailoring, and implementing three important physical activity-oriented policies to promote health equity.



These policy areas were identified by Voices for Healthy Kids as levers that can make communities and neighborhoods more livable by ensuring ALL people can walk, bike, and roll safely for recreation or to travel where they need to go – work, school, the library, grocery stores or parks.

Rural communities doing work related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure funding, Complete Streets, and Safe Routes to School were identified through a gray literature search and with input from the Activating Rural America Workgroup and Advisory Board. Members of the Workgroup and Advisory Board recommended specific organizations and

individuals to contact and provided input on the interview questions. Interviews with thirteen communities representing diversity in geographic location and policy focus were conducted between April and July 2020. The calls lasted approximately 1-1.5 hours and were set up on Zoom; video was used when possible to facilitate an interactive discussion. Interviews included two Activating Rural America leadership team members and one or two community representatives engaged in active living policy efforts.

Call recordings and transcripts were assigned to a project team member to take notes and highlight themes from the conversation. The interview questions were used as a general guide to identify primary themes. Additional themes were developed based on recurring topics that appeared in the review of the transcripts. A consensus process was used to finalize a codebook, which was used to analyze and summarize key takeaways across communities for the following primary areas: how and why this work was started, benefits and successes, sustainability, funding support, barriers, and lessons learned. Community profile pages were also developed for twelve rural communities, which are included in this guide by policy area.

Who Should Use This Resource?

This is a resource for local, state, or national individuals, agencies, or advocacy organizations who would like to champion or support efforts that make it safer for all people in rural communities to walk, bike, and roll safely and enjoyably. This guide can also be used to educate decision-makers about benefits of creating access to places for physical activity and actions they can take to help mobilize and/or support efforts to make it easier for people to move more in rural settings. This guide was designed to be used as a single collective document OR as separate sub-documents depending on the needs of each community and/or user.

Rural advocates and residents need examples of active living design and policies that they can envision implementing in their own communities. The community profiles summarize experiences from other rural towns that can help stimulate

ideas and generate enthusiasm. This guide also includes advice from people representing various levels of involvement and stages of progress. Following are some lessons learned that multiple communities shared:

- State-level policies about transportation planning and community health assessments matter.
- Funding can and should come from both health and transportation agencies.
- Planning and policy work take time, but it has long-term benefits that make it worth the investment.
- While not a focus of our interview questions, the importance of shared-use and joint-use agreements to support active living in rural communities was noted by workgroup members and interviewees.

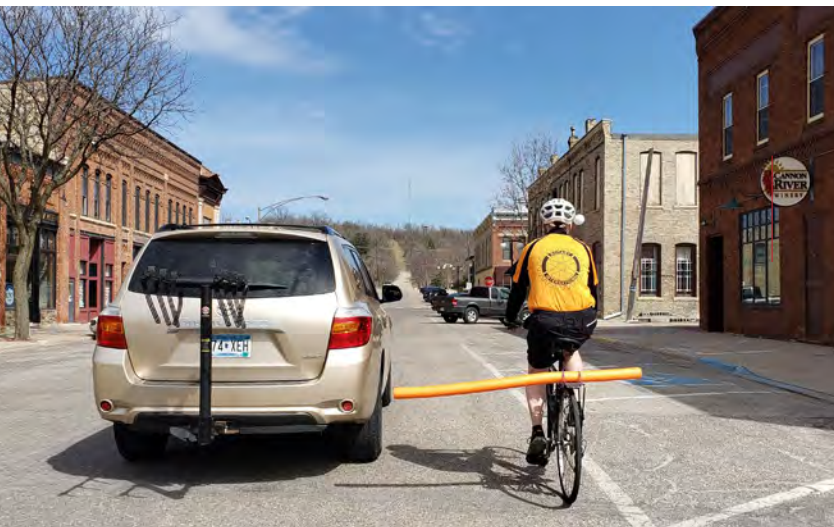
Reasons Why and How Rural Communities Began This Work

Nearly all communities started their work to address needs (outcome factors/goals) identified by the local community, with the most common need being health-related. Two process factors emerged as drivers of the community's efforts, including: 1) the work was a result of a pre-existing partnership, and 2) the work was driven by state-level funding and/or legislation.



Local Needs Identified

The identification of local needs was the most often referenced reason for starting the work. Local “needs” were usually expressed as a broad initial interest that became more focused over time.



“And at that time, there was interest in biking because Cannon Falls is a trail head for a very popular multi-use trail called the Cannon Valley Trail that has been around for 20 plus years. And then there's some other state trails that are going in around the community so biking is part of the culture in Cannon Falls... for the local residents, there were some opportunities.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS



“If I remember correctly, it's been like 15 years maybe when that started. They talked about poverty and how to get rid of poverty, whatever kind of situation it was in. There were a couple of groups that came out of there and Madison Byways was the one that... there was a group of folks that had attended that and they just said, “You know what? One of the things that we're really lacking is active transportation. We used that Safe Routes to School study to identify areas that needed walking, biking, and rolling facility. That infrastructure. Then we use that to identify those projects and then go after funding through multiple sources.”

—Ennis, MT

B&P

The local needs identified that started these efforts were often related to health – specifically either to improve safety or reduce the prevalence of chronic disease.

Interviewees expressed local needs could be identified informally (to the mayor via personal, private, and council meetings) or formally. Formal needs were identified through:



Pre-existing Partnerships

The majority of these communities capitalized on preexisting or ongoing partnerships or collaborations where trust was already established - even if the focus of that collaboration had to change a little.

“ So we try to look for partnerships and all our communities and not go on and say ‘You need to do this, this and this,’ but look for where are the opportunities to improve walking and biking or if a community wants to focus on healthy eating then we do that. Cannon Falls my relationship with them started with working with the city and making improvements to their farmer’s market. And then after building some of the relationships with the staff over there, started asking if there was any interest in exploring Complete Streets and improving walking and biking.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS



State-level Funding or Legislation

Half of the communities noted their efforts were sparked by state-level funding or legislation. For example, efforts in Cannon Falls, MN (SRTS) started because of state-level legislation, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership, (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ship/index.html>) for county-level policy, systems, and environment work that included a state-level appropriation. Other funding sources included a grant program from the state’s health department and grants from state coal severance and tobacco settlement endowments and trust funds, and federal funding administered by the state. Other legislative generators of this work included state Growth Management and Comprehensive/Master Planning statutes.

“ Even though we’re a pretty small government, I would say we do have some pretty progressive thought as dictated by our State Growth Management Act and also our planning or Community Development Department. So, we are mandated to come up with a Comprehensive Plan for planning purposes. One the goals that are in there, stated goals have to do with the provision for open space, for recreation, for congregation, for connectivity, of course for safety network for cyclists.”

—Sequim, WA

CS



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Many of the communities mentioned the work came from a community devotion or passion for the work as well as a need identified in the community.



Complete Streets

Work in this area started from partnerships and needs identified in the community to benefit health.



Safe Routes to School

Efforts in these communities largely were born out of local needs assessments and state driven initiatives or funding to benefit the health of those in the local communities.

Benefits

Ways Communities Benefitted from the Policy Work

Communities benefitted in many tangible and intangible ways from this work. Tangible benefits of the work most often involved seeing physical changes to the built environment and witnessing increased use of new or improved infrastructure. Intangible benefits were critical and included community awareness and political support, both of which were mentioned by over half of the interviewees.

Tangible Benefits

Observable changes to the built environment were described by most of the communities, notably by all of the communities focused on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure funding, but only three of the six Complete Streets-focused communities. The adoption of policy and creation of an action plan were described more often by Complete Streets-focused communities than communities focused on the other two policy areas. Observable, physical changes in several communities spurred investment in other infrastructure improvements.

Goodness begets goodness, as described in two different interviews.



“

We also added an outdoor recreational facility with the help of the National Fitness Campaign. And so that was a big, it's in an eye-catching location, it's alongside of one of the newly completed phases of Greenway. And it's continued to garner a lot of public support and use and things like that.”

—Ruston, LA

CS

“

Through our trail, we've also connected an archery park to it, which we're one of the only ones in the area to do that. We have connected to our wellness center. We had a gentleman give us substantial money... we connected it to that.”

—Hebron, NE

B&P

Intangible Benefits

Many interviewees described a benefit of receiving additional political support that resulted from their work, including all of the Complete Streets-focused communities. This additional focus on advocacy and awareness in Complete Streets communities may be due to the type of work needed to change perceptions and policy in this area as compared to the other policy areas.

That was really important. Just getting the word out. And because the whole state's a small town, as soon as you can get something done or just get something going, word can spread pretty quickly. And as soon as locals see that a positive vibe is being created, you might say, about their community, it just echoes. It just builds that willingness within the communities to take the next steps.”

—Beckley, WV

CS

“

It's definitely helped us gain an awareness of what their needs are. It's made them feel like more of the community. I think then that gave them a better feeling that the city is actually working to help them as well. It's not just about business and economic development even though that plays a huge role but it also helps create a better life for them.”

—Osceola, MO

CS

Well, the physical improvement on the ground. I live here too. It's nice to see improvements where I live in the physical environment. There's more awareness certainly. It stages our municipalities for larger grant opportunities...”

—Potsdam, NY

CS



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Communities we spoke to mentioned improved community awareness, physical changes, and increased use of infrastructure as a result of work in this area.



Complete Streets

Key benefits from these efforts were improved community awareness and local coalition growth.



Safe Routes to School

The main benefits for these efforts included physical changes to the environment which increased or improved use of the infrastructure as well as increased political support.

Sustainability

Key Aspects to Sustaining Efforts and Initiatives

Keeping programs and efforts going year after year was a challenge for many of the communities we spoke with. Built environment and policy change can take time; how did these communities keep things going? With community support, partnerships, funding, and patience.

Community Support and Benefits

- To sustain efforts, initiatives need to show that the work is supported by the community through use of new infrastructure and participation in events.
- Part of the participation and support was also showing tangible benefits to the community through the work being done.

“I think relating it to people and how it’s beneficial for them as far as like, “Hey, don’t you want to take a walk with your grandparents or take a walk with your kids?” How important that is for not just activity wise, because we know that’s really important.”

—Ennis, MT

B&P

- Communities also took care in communicating these benefits through social and traditional media outlets.

Coalitions and Partnerships

- Communities we spoke with relayed the importance of establishing coalitions and partnerships to sustain work.

“I don’t want this thing to die, so I think you got to get people bought into it because the idea of the whole Healthy Communities Coalition is that if I go, they can sustain themselves... So, community buy-in, stakeholder buy-in, I think that’s the key to all of this, because if people aren’t invested in what’s going on, they will not do it, especially in these rural communities. They won’t do it.”

—Tallulah, LA

CS

- Whether it was creation of new coalitions or leveraging existing ones, it was critical to host events and have consistent meetings and communication to maintain momentum toward positive change.
- These partnerships not only made the work easier with more people helping it also created more buy-in across the community.

“It really is community driven. And so we look for those partnerships and build on them. And the ultimate goal is that sustainability piece. And that’s not going to happen without the support of the whole community.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS

Funding

- Continued funding either through an ongoing grant or applying for new grants was vital to sustaining efforts.
- Additionally, funding established in state, federal, or local budgets must be maintained to continue this work.

I think funding it. If the Utah legislation and the federal legislation keeps funding these types of programs, I think they'll keep happening. If it's on the cities to figure out how to fund these infrastructure projects, they're going to probably come to a grinding halt."

—Hildale, UT

SRTS

Planning, Goals, and Patience

- The value of good planning both short-term and long-term was key. These strong plans helped during times of transition, as well as to secure funding.

So the investments that we have made in master planning, around recreation projects, and a lot of other kind of master plans, have been the key to not only our funding, small funding, but funding the larger funders who are willing to do a project."

—Rutherford, NC

B&P

- Setting achievable specific goals was important for promoting sustainability.
- Completing these concrete goals and programs established a sense of success and helped to motivate continued progress.
- While short-term successes often helped motivation and morale, patience is needed for long-term change.

Nothing's impossible. Sometimes it takes a whole lot longer to get something accomplished than you ever thought."

—Potsdam, NY

CS



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Community support, long-term planning, and building or leveraging coalitions to promote these changes are vital when it comes to sustaining efforts.



Complete Streets

Supporting and sustaining Complete Streets was most often done through continued funding and support from coalitions.



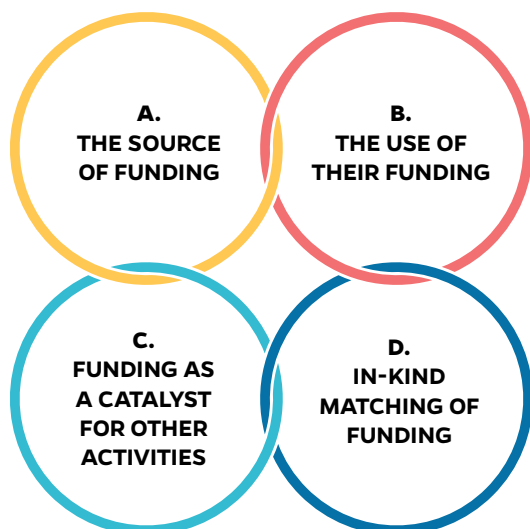
Safe Routes to School

Partnerships within the community (specifically with Public Health and Schools) and fostering community support through participation in events were key to sustaining these efforts.

Funding Support

Types of Rural Active Living Policy Work

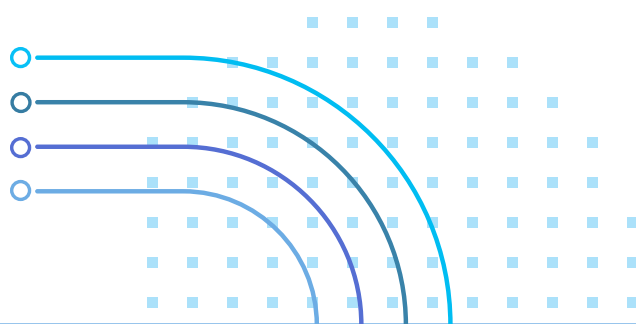
Communities talked extensively about funding for their work, specifically focusing on



Funding Sources

Funding sources described (in order of most to least frequently mentioned): public sources (local, state, federal governments), foundations, individual contributions, conservation agencies, and membership dues.

Most often, funding was provided by the town or city, or by a philanthropic foundation matching a state grant or a federal grant administered by the state, such as a Recreational Trails Program, Transportation Alternatives Program, or Community Development Block Grant.



The communities were very creative in finding local funding to meet the required match for state or federal funding. Here are a few examples:

- **City support:** retail sales; sales tax (3/4 of a penny); 1/10 of a penny retail sales surcharge for a Transportation Benefit District; City budget allocation; City staff time or labor; City land donation
- **County support:** grant to a non-profit for an engineering study
- **Foundation/philanthropy support examples**

City support combined with Kanawha Valley Foundation match for bike racks on buses – Beckley, WV

CS

Support from the YMCA, Madison Byways, and Big Sky Trust Fund – Ennis, MT

B&P

Support from the Nebraska Community Foundation – Hebron, NE

B&P

Support from the Stonecutter Foundation and a RHI Legacy Foundation grant (20% local match; formerly a foundation that only supported a hospital that was sold) – Rutherford Co, NC

B&P

Support from an AARP Community Challenge Grant – Tallulah, LA

CS

Support from individual property owners for Community Development Block Grant funding – Hildale, UT

SRTS

Other unique approaches

“Since you’ve been through town, you know that we have a couple big box stores here. We established a Transportation Benefit District to get a 10th of the cent, surcharge on retail sales to devote to transportation projects. And that give us a nice cool \$600 grand, a million a year sometimes to be able to do this kind of thing. So, our funding is coming from that.”

—Sequim, WA

CS



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Many of the communities we spoke to involved in this work were funded by private foundations as well as a mixture of local, federal, and state levels.



Complete Streets

Complete streets work was largely funded at the local and state levels.



Safe Routes to School

Communities involved in this work mentioned state level funding and support for these efforts.

Funding Uses

Primarily, funding was used for planning and policy development, project labor, and project materials. The Complete Streets-focused communities mentioned uses of funding most often.

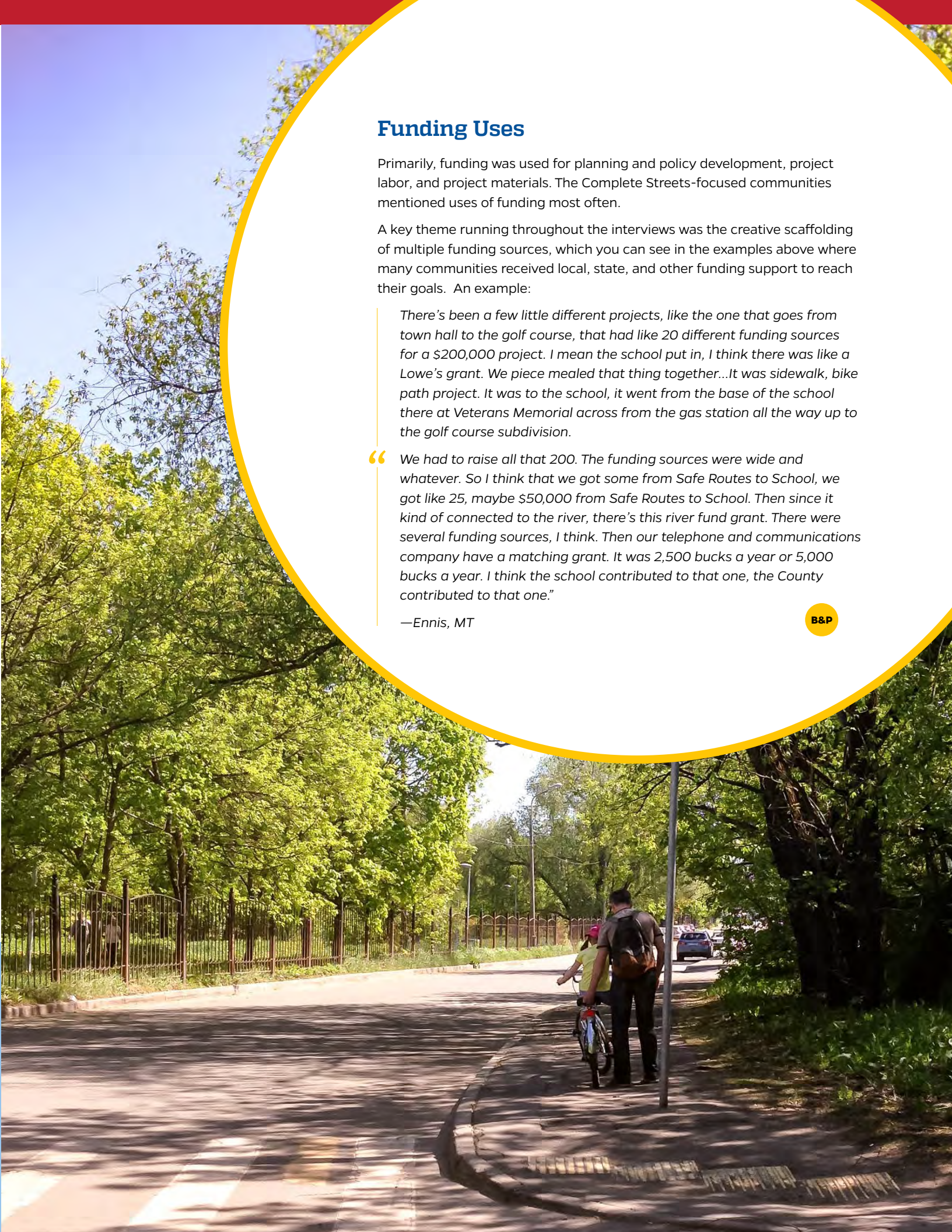
A key theme running throughout the interviews was the creative scaffolding of multiple funding sources, which you can see in the examples above where many communities received local, state, and other funding support to reach their goals. An example:

There's been a few little different projects, like the one that goes from town hall to the golf course, that had like 20 different funding sources for a \$200,000 project. I mean the school put in, I think there was like a Lowe's grant. We piece mealed that thing together...It was sidewalk, bike path project. It was to the school, it went from the base of the school there at Veterans Memorial across from the gas station all the way up to the golf course subdivision.

“ We had to raise all that 200. The funding sources were wide and whatever. So I think that we got some from Safe Routes to School, we got like 25, maybe \$50,000 from Safe Routes to School. Then since it kind of connected to the river, there's this river fund grant. There were several funding sources, I think. Then our telephone and communications company have a matching grant. It was 2,500 bucks a year or 5,000 bucks a year. I think the school contributed to that one, the County contributed to that one.”

—Ennis, MT

B&P



Barriers

The Biggest Obstacles Faced by Communities Doing this Work

At times things may have not gone according to plan for the communities we spoke with. We asked them to describe the biggest barriers they faced in their policy, programming, and advocacy work. What we heard were themes related to funding, leadership, the perceived value of the work, dependence on volunteers, and unexpected priority shifts.

Funding

- Internal funding restrictions and difficulties securing outside funding were frequently mentioned as barriers.
- Several stakeholders mentioned difficulties sustaining policy or programmatic change when grants/funding ends.

“We had received funding for the first two years of the program. And then the second two years, the funding was reduced and [County] applied for it but did not receive funding so the program disappeared for two years.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS

- Similarly, stakeholders also mentioned administrative difficulties applying for and implementing external grants; many communities lack dedicated grant writers and administration familiar with external funding “hoops.”

“So it’s just an administrative nightmare, and I think the communities of our size, and us included, really have a difficult [time] managing those grants [Community Development Block Grants]. There’s an astronomical amount of regulatory hoops that you have to jump through.”

—Hildale, UT

SRTS



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Funding and perceived value were important for this policy area. Communities looking to make a change in this area may need to do more work emphasizing the benefits to the community in order to obtain and maintain funding.

Leadership Transition

- Lack of continuity in leadership can lead to changes in priorities and long-term goals as well as the time needed to bring the new members up to speed on current plans.

“The city has been in transition. So we haven’t really tried hard to do that. And when I say the city is in transition, the administrator left, they had an interim for a while who was covering two positions....So the timing has just been a little bit of a struggle for policy improvements.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS

Lack of Perceived Value

- As there are many competing interests and values in every community, some stakeholders mentioned that some individuals did not see the value in these policies and programs.
- Communicating or demonstrating the value is critical to the momentum of these projects.

“The community didn’t quite see the value until the kids actually got there and started painting. There’s, I think 24 total murals that’ll be in the street that whole route. That was pretty cool to see and see people’s attitude about that change. Once it started being painted, oh, that is cool.”

—Osceola, MO

CS

Reliance on Volunteers

- Many stakeholders related their reliance on volunteers to promote policy change as well as implementing built environment changes.

“One thing that we found is that everybody wants all of this to happen but they don’t really want to volunteer their time off, either, to make it happen.”

—Stilwell, OK

SRTS



Complete Streets

Short-term delays (Acts of Nature) outside of the control of the community were mentioned most often in response to Complete Streets. Understanding that these delays happen, persevering, and patience are critical.



Safe Routes to School

Leadership turnover and funding were significant barriers here. Community stakeholders mentioned that a concrete plan to follow helped to alleviate these barriers.



Advice from Communities and Lessons Learned

Communities we spoke with described many lessons learned, general words of advice, and specific advice for implementors, advocates, decision makers, and national-level organizations working on similar initiatives.

General Advice

Assess community needs and strengths

Assessing community needs through surveys or environmental assessments can focus the work on what is needed most as well as provide tangible evidence for the community and decision makers.

“Don’t be afraid to talk to people. You have to talk to people. You have to understand your community. If your community does not, you will find out either before or after the fact. But, communication with your community.”

—Tallulah, LA

CS

Likewise, understanding specific community strengths including existing infrastructure, human capital (i.e., a community champion), and partnerships or coalitions would accelerate the work.

“Identify your assets first... Figure out what’s pretty, what people would want to see, and develop your connections around what your existing assets are.”

—Rutherford, NC

B&P

“For me, and I think this is key, everywhere in rural communities is those local advocates that recruiting them that they’re very passionate about making it safer and easier for people to walk, bike and roll. So, having connections to those people to help recruit.”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS

Encourage diverse coalitions

Interviewees also mentioned the need for diverse coalitions to support and promote progressive change. Diverse viewpoints from a variety of stakeholders promoted success within the communities.

“Get in as many voices as you possibly can. And honestly, if somebody is pretty much against this cause, get them there because their minds will change. I mean, you want to hear people who have a different opinion than yours. I think that’s super important too, is just staying open minded and inviting and welcoming everyone that wants to have a voice in it to have a voice.”

—Hebron, NE

B&P

For Implementors

Use templates, handbooks, and examples from funded projects

Using templates and handbooks reduced the amount of work needed while improving the quality by learning from successful similar programs.

“*Safe Routes to School Handbook, has been my go-to guide and all our communities. It really lays out the steps of what we want to do. I have utilized the Active Living Research website and guides, bike friendly communities. We’ve dabbled in Small Town and Rural Design Guide.*”

—Cannon Falls, MN

SRTS

Also, people we spoke with mentioned the need for templates and handbooks to include a section that is specific or tailored to rural communities.

“*I think number one, there are a lot of tools and resources out there on what should be done. Pay more attention locally to how you need to be doing it and so when I say that I mean everything around context.*”

— Program Manager (Community Health Transformation, South Carolina Office of Rural Health)

B&P

CS

“*And to take other people’s programs off the shelf and just try it. I think you have to couple that with your knowledge of your community.*”

—Sequim, WA

CS



Find Other Communities Doing Similar Work

- Advocates suggested finding other communities doing similar work or funded through similar grants to learn together and exchange ideas.
- The key to this exchange is finding comparable communities and projects and realizing that success in one community may not guarantee success in others.

“*We have to compare small communities to small communities, because otherwise, they just think it’s for city people. I don’t want to say city people, but they’re just very practical and do we really need this?*”

—Ennis, MN

B&P

“*Find out who else in your region has done this work. I’ll bet that they will find a community that has, in their region, similar demographics. Use the resources that are already out there.*”

—Potsdam, NY

CS

For Decision Makers

Comprehensive Community Planning is Essential

People we spoke with relayed the value of comprehensive planning. Further, including multiple stakeholders, advocacy groups, and decision makers was essential to planning and programming fidelity and ultimately following through on these plans.

“*I would engage everybody early and often and have a plan... Now we’re working on our master plan, for us, like seats in the town commission turnover quite a bit. Even our mayor, I think we’ve had six mayors in 10 years. Put the money towards planning, because then that’s what all the grant funding [asks for]*”

—Ennis, MT

B&P

Being able to effectively plan short term and long term provided vision across leadership change, helped sustain efforts, and increased the community’s ability to apply for funding.

“*They created a plan but this plan was catered specifically for the [City] with proponents that could actually be completed. It wasn’t like these big grand ideas that couldn’t have follow through.*”

—Osceola, MO

CS

“*So doing some of that hard work in the planning processes builds that sense of synergy and community around some of these projects. And that’s sometimes where people come together and first brainstorm about what-if.*”

—Rutherford, NC

B&P

For Advocates

Build Relationships with Decision Makers

Building a working relationship with decision makers prior to asking for funding or policy change was a major lesson learned through this work.

“My biggest piece of advice would be to build a relationship with whoever you’re going to be working with before you go in trying to ask for something, basically. Get to know them, get to know the things that they’re comfortable with, their thought processes, what’s important to them. Then when you do go in to make your request or to talk about what you want to do, actually have a plan lined up and have reasons for why this is important to the entire community, who it benefits the most, what they get out of it.”

—Stilwell, OK

SRTS

“I can’t go to elected officials and say, “Well, you need this.” You have to understand who you’re working with, the people that you’re serving in your community, and you have to understand the why behind the what and you’ve got to get people to buy into that. So, I would tell anybody, anybody, you have to talk to people. You cannot be shy. You cannot be scared. You have to talk. Communication is key.”

—Tallulah, LA

CS

For National Level Organizations

Adapt to and Include a Rural Focus

Stakeholders mentioned a need to adapt national plans to rural communities. Rural communities often have dramatically different needs and strengths, which need adaptations in federal funding and guidance. Each rural community is unique so this adaptation would be done best locally. More consideration for rural communities and their uniqueness may be needed in federal planning to promote widespread change.

“But at the same time, we realized that all of the science that’s coming out, traffic studies, everything, none of it applied to the communities we were looking at. The traffic patterns, the volume, it just isn’t applicable. And we were well aware that the storytelling, it wouldn’t work.”

—Beckley, WV

CS



Community Profiles focused on Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding include:



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Funding

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure funding includes state, regional, and local financing mechanisms that create equitable, long-term funding for bicycling, walking, and rolling projects and encourage programs for communities most in need. Voices for Healthy Kids supports these mechanisms as part of their policy agenda (2019-2020).



This community of fewer than 1,000 people was able to overcome barriers to creatively fund infrastructure changes to make it safer and easier for community members to be physically active. Despite a small city staff size and the lack of technical positions, like a city planner, they were able to apply for and receive several grants that funded projects to encourage physical activity. As a result, children began to walk and bike to school more often and older adults were able to get outside more often. Local businesses also benefited from these infrastructure changes due to increased foot traffic. Community buy-in with a 15-year history of engagement helped push this community's work forward.

This interview was conducted with a town commissioner and founding member of Madison Byways, who was involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- 15 years ago, the Montana Horizons Program, an initiative of Montana State University Extension focused on addressing rural poverty, (http://msucommunitydevelopment.org/paul/content/MT%20Horizons2010_final-1.pdf) brought together several community groups in Ennis that identified a need for active transportation opportunities like additional trails
- This original collaboration enabled a local non-profit, Madison Byways, to work toward securing Transportation Alternatives Program funding for a trail, which then led to Safe Routes to School and additional funding

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Diverse funding sources
- A history of community engagement and buy-in for this work
- An advocate ran for elected office to ensure the local government implemented infrastructure changes



Community Profile

Ennis, Montana

Community Characteristics	Ennis	Madison County
Population ³	849	8,302
Total Area ³ , square miles	0.7	3,587.2
People per Square Mile ³	1,212	2.3
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$46,280	\$54,107
Poverty Rate ³	5.2%	8.4%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	94.8%	95.0%
• black:	0.2%	0.2%
• two or more races:	4.9%	2.9%
• other:	0%	1.9%
Median age ³ , years	48	53
Number of Schools ⁴	3	13
RUCA ⁵	10	10
Paid City/County Planner?	No	Yes
Part of an MPO?	No	–
University or college in community?	No	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



Interviewer: "Then do you currently represent that organization, Madison Byways, or are you a volunteer or an executive director that's paid?"

Response: "No. I took a sabbatical. So one of the projects that we did which was getting the transportation alternatives funding to put in sidewalks in Ennis, around our main intersection, we got beat up over that project a lot as a nonprofit, it took so much effort. There's probably like, I don't know, a handful of us. We went to all these meetings and whatever. We just took a hiatus... now I'm on the town of Ennis town council, because with my advocacy, with that, the town of Ennis was going to turn down a half a million dollars worth of infrastructure and I just couldn't believe it. I was like, we need someone on the inside to make that happen."

- Relating the benefits and additional positives (like family time) to the community was important to emphasize the need for these resources
- Engaging business owners and relaying the business benefits of infrastructure changes increased community buy-in

What Barriers Emerged?

- Local government pushback due to officials wanting to avoid hard subjects to protect their relationships with other community members gets in the way of policy change

“But now I think, what’s hard with local government is, all the people are volunteers and so they don’t always want to take on hard subjects because everybody knows everybody. But we have a town council now that sees the need.”

- Community members did not always understand why environmental changes are important or how these changes benefit them directly
- Many town council and city staff positions were volunteer based, with only 8 city employees in total, which limited capacity for technical assistance
- A lack of technical or professional level positions in the community to move the work forward affected how quickly the work could be advanced

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Engage the community early and often
- A master plan greatly assisted with grant applications and asking for city funding to support this work

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- More children began walking and biking to school and seniors got outside more often
- Community engagement increased and attitude towards environmental changes shifted to a more positive and optimistic point of view

“Introducing (connections to sidewalks and bike trails), I think that has been the biggest success, is people going, “We do need this.” I think that people think of themselves here as humble and we don’t need those fancy things, but once they use them, they’re like, these are really nice and it’s really important for all generations.”

- Local businesses experienced increased foot traffic as a result of changes to park infrastructure, making it easier for community members to get to and from the businesses

Who Led This Work?

- The five town council members and the mayor were the key decision makers in this community
- Several civic organizations were prominent in the community, and having their support made moving the work forward much easier
- Positive relationships with the county commissioners and Montana DOT were important as they were key community influencers

What Funding Supports This Work?

- Originally, Safe Routes to School funding was received to support this work

“We used that Safe Routes to School study to identify areas that needed walking, biking, and rolling facility. That infrastructure. Then we use that to identify those projects and then go after funding through multiple sources.”

- The town has creatively stitched together multiple sources of funding to support projects

“There’s been a few little different projects, like the one that goes from town hall to the golf course, that had like 20 different funding sources for a \$200,000 project. I mean the school put in, I think there was like a Lowe’s grant. We piecemealed that thing together.”

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding was matched by the county. More information about Montana TAP can be found here: https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_applications.html
- Funding to complete the master plan is made up of funds from the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund, with matching funds from the Town of Ennis, Madison County, and the Montana Main Street program
- The Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund was created in 2005 from \$20 million transferred from the coal severance tax permanent fund to the Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund. Also, a portion of the total coal severance taxes collected is annually deposited into a fund which is for planning projects and job creation. Learn more at <https://marketmt.com/BSTF/About>.
- The Madison Byways organization used a fundraising campaign to pay for the original engineering study that led to the application for Transportation Alternatives Program funding

For more information, please contact Lisa Roberts, Town Commissioner and founding member of Madison Byways, at lisar@ennismontana.org.



Community Profile

Hebron, Nebraska



This community benefitted greatly from a community champion who worked tirelessly to increase access to places for physical activity. As a result of this champion's connections, a partnership with the regional Health Department (Public Health Solutions), and a community vision, access to places for physical activity has greatly improved over the last 15 years. The progress made in physical activity access has clearly made an impact which can be seen in the recent reduction in county physical inactivity rates, an increase in community engagement, and use of new infrastructure such as trails. Additionally, this community was able to make this progress without using state or federal grants, instead gathering local donations and support from local organizations.

This interview was conducted with a city council member and an employee of Public Health Solutions, both are involved in this work.

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- A community champion in a leadership position who pushed forward as an advocate for their community and its health
- Outside perspectives from Public Health Solutions and a hired facilitator
- Establishing a Walking Coalition that meets monthly, demonstrates success, and makes recommendations to the City Council was critical
- A focus on sustainable projects, on what will make the long-term impact, and on what will allow the community to take advantage of the changes instead of focusing on education and awareness
- A common vision or action plan provided next steps as well as a long-term goal and strategy for reaching it

Community Characteristics	Hebron	Thayer County
Population ³	1,630	5,057
Total Area ³ , square miles	1.4	573.7
People per Square Mile ³	1,164.3	8.8
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$49,787	\$51,821
Poverty Rate ³	10.8%	9.7%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	93.8%	96.7%
• black:	1.4%	0.5%
• two or more races:	4.4%	1.8%
• other:	0.4%	0.6%
Median age ³ , years	53.6	46.5
Number of Schools ⁴	2	8
RUCA ⁵	10	10
Paid City/County Planner?	No	No
Part of an MPO?	No	–
University or college in community?	Yes	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.

The planning grant is what got this whole thing started because it allowed us to make a plan. And our action plan has allowed us then to get so much more in funding because we have that action plan. We know what we're going to do. We have a plan for how we're going to do it. We don't always know exactly how it's going to work out, but it's well thought out and has that community support behind it."



What Barriers Emerged?

- It was difficult to get public support for some infrastructure additions such as sidewalks
- Because of the size of the community, it was extremely important to avoid offending or upsetting partners, maintaining focus on collaborative work
- It was difficult to maintain volunteer support and involvement, which created a barrier to moving forward when there were not funds to pay people to do certain tasks like pouring concrete

Early, within all of this, we felt like we wanted to try to do as much volunteer work as possible. And our very first pour that we ever did with concrete, believe it or not, there were about eight people there and it was diverse... But after a while, not everybody is willing to put in the time and effort. It's a whole lot easier if someone's going to pay for it someone to get it done."

- This community originally did not want to use state or federal funding for its projects to avoid bureaucratic delays, which gave them control but also created funding difficulties for larger projects

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- The community hired a facilitator who helped develop leadership at the local health department and trained a small community design team on how to manage the community process and stakeholder engagement, which led to a community summit and action plan
- Advocates fostered relationships with other community connections to find opportunities for funding and additional partnerships
- City staff time has been used as an "in-kind labor match" for funds received that pay for materials
- A wide variety of individuals contributed to the coalition for this work

...I have an 80-year-old husband wife on my coalition team, all the way down to somebody in their twenties. So the span of that really makes our community click, you know what I'm saying? And the pieces that everybody brings to the table is critical."

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Physical inactivity rates dropped 4% between 2017 and 2019 for the county
- Community members began using the trails at higher rates, especially with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Engagement from community members increased and many of them became involved in planning events
- A resolution was passed by the Hebron City Council to support walking for health and transportation

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Physical inactivity rates dropped 4% between 2017 and 2019 for the county
- Community members began using the trails at higher rates, especially with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Engagement from community members increased and many of them became involved in planning events
- A resolution was passed by the Hebron City Council to support walking for health and transportation

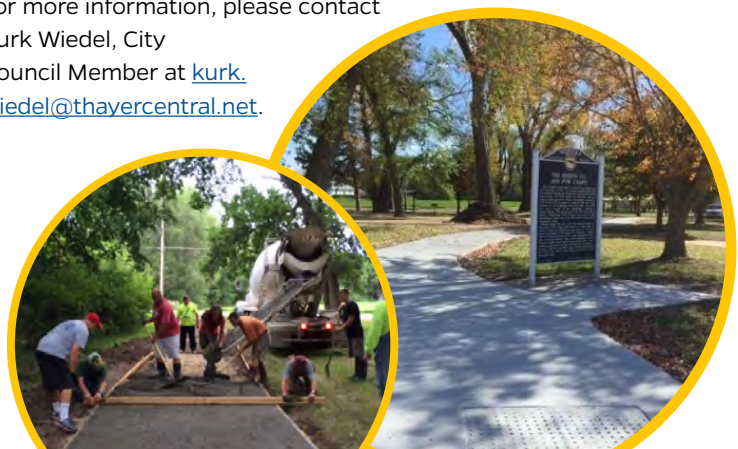
Who Led This Work?

- Thayer County Walking Coalition
- Hebron City Recreation Committee advises city council to help implement the action plan
- The community champion
- The regional Health Department, Public Health Solutions

What Funding Supports This Work?

- Nebraska Community Foundation's Hebron Community Foundation Fund
- Public Health Solutions funding through a CDC Chronic Disease Prevention grant and the state Maternal Child Health department
- The Little Blue Natural Resources District's grant
- City of Hebron used sales tax money
- AARP Community Challenge Grant (to Thayer County Walking Coalition for trail signage and lighting)
- More information can be found here: <https://states.aarp.org/nebraska/aarp-nebraska-announces-community-challenge-grants>
- Safe Kids Worldwide grant money was used for Safe Streets projects
- Local business owner in-kind contributions (supplies at cost)

For more information, please contact
Kurk Wiedel, City
Council Member at kurk.wiedel@thayercentral.net.





This community has worked to increase access to physical activity infrastructure, especially through the Thermal Belt Rail-Trail. This project, beginning in 1999, transformed abandoned railbeds into a 13.5-mile rail-trail for public use connecting small towns throughout the county. Much of this work was led by a community advocate that now works for the region's Rural Planning Organization who has fostered a close relationship over the years with key community leaders, including county managers, and a local foundation focused on preventing chronic disease. This foundation has funded the planning and construction of the rail-trail, including paving the 13.5-mile trail. The trail has enabled more residents to be active and resulted in increased economic opportunities for the businesses near it and even spurred the construction of a new housing development along it. More information and an informative video about this project can be found here: <https://www.thermalbelttrail.com/>.

This interview was conducted with the Safe Routes to School Coordinator/RPO Planner for the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission and the Community Impact Director for the RHI Legacy Foundation, both of whom were involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Through community champions
- “Individual champions who had vision and brought others along with them.”
- Decisions and policies stemmed from finding what infrastructure community members use and finding a way to make it safer
 - RHI Legacy Foundation (formerly the Rutherford Hospital, Inc. Foundation) funded a regional trail plan to coordinate the efforts of multiple towns in the county as a chronic disease prevention effort



Community Profile

Rutherford County, North Carolina

Community Characteristics	Rutherfordton	Rutherford County
Population ³	4,073	66,599
Total Area ³ , square miles	4.1	565.2
People per Square Mile ³	993.4	117.8
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$47,175	\$42,608
Poverty Rate ³	14.3%	17.9%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	90%	86.8%
• black:	4.3%	9.5%
• two or more races:	4.1%	2.0%
• other:	1.6%	1.6%
Median age ³ , years	49.9	45
Number of Schools ⁴	4	18
RUCA ⁵	5	4-10
Paid City/County Planner?	No	Yes (part-time)
Part of an MPO?	No (part of a 4 county Rural Planning Org.)	
University or college in community?	Yes	-

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Small incremental steps were taken that lead to big successes

“The small steps then led to RHI board voting to fund the paving for the entire 13.5-mile trail. About \$5 million all at once. That investment has now led to the towns and the county each investing additional dollars in the trail for enhancements.”

- A fully developed plan led to more interest and confidence from funders
- It was important to communicate with the community through social media and the local newspaper
- Relationships with town elected officials and city council members were key to sustaining effective work

- To more fully leverage community assets, it was important to build connections among community members to foster engagement and buy-in

“So, building your connections between your assets is a big piece of it, but building connections with people... people know who's interested, and you kind of build that group of interested people where you can get your energy behind, your synergy behind”

What Barriers Emerged?

- Legal action over ownership of railroads that had been transitioned to trails created an issue within the community
- Political turnover extended the time it took to accomplish the work
- Funding was often one of the largest barriers, as private donations were difficult to come by in the community and the timing of grants can be difficult
- There was no county Parks and Recreation Department or any parks or recreation programming using existing infrastructure

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Worked with advocacy groups and created a community health council led by an RHI Legacy Foundation staff person to get voices heard
- Developed personal relationships with leadership and decision makers before moving forward with work
- Focused on small victories like getting small portions of trail paved to gain community buy-in and show the potential for future investment
- Created a master plan with steps to a major goal, divided up into smaller goals
- Showed the potential community effect by emphasizing certain members using the trails, such as mothers with children in a stroller

“I think it's the visual of all the women... Women pushing strollers sells trails more than anything. Once the trail was paved, you saw kids on bicycles, women with strollers and different people using it that had never used it before.”

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Partially driven by the pandemic, many families with children were using new trails and other infrastructure as a way to spend time outside
- A new housing development was able to be redeveloped as a result of the trail coming through
- The trail has presented economic development opportunities for the shops and towns around it

- This project has fostered partnerships between communities that was not seen before.

What's happening on the trail has led to unprecedented cooperation amongst the towns in the county that, in no other project have we ever seen that.”

“We pretty quickly realized that a consolidated effort, a concerted effort was a better plan because each of the municipalities had different capabilities and capacities and needs and it would have never been a consistent, something that ran through the whole county and was the same, all the way through. So, our focus then as a foundation turned more into just getting the infrastructure built and then letting the municipalities all create the environment that they wanted around the trail versus letting them create it for their municipality... So, we changed our focus to getting the major thread built and then letting the towns add their personality along the trail.”

Who Led This Work?

- Representatives from surrounding municipalities formed a group called the Trail Partners that came to community consensus on certain topics regarding the trail
- A local physician advocated for investment in parks and recreation, which led to the creation of an advisory committee and a job position created at the county level for that work
- The Economic Development Director had original vision to preserve the railroad corridors for use

What Funding Supports This Work?

- The RHI Legacy Foundation is at its core a funder which operates on a one-year grant cycle. You can learn more about the foundation here (<https://www.rhilegacyfoundation.com/>)
- A North Carolina DOT grant funded a Safe Routes to School program with the local 20% match from the RHI Legacy Foundation

“This funding came after the trail was constructed. It helps encourage use now. The RPO planner portion of the job is funded by IPDC and support trail counts and other bike-ped planning”

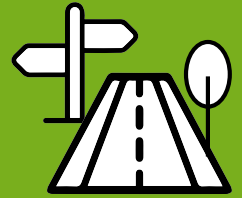
- The county government has maintained a funded position, added in 2006, to increase capacity for trail-related project planning
- Rutherford Outdoor Coalition now has a full-time staff member and an AmeriCorps trails coordinator to support area trails

For more information, please contact Safe Routes to School Coordinator and RPO Planner Jerry Stensland at jstensland@regionc.org.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets efforts include road construction and reconstruction at the state, regional, and community levels that creates Complete Streets that are safe and convenient for all users and all modes of transportation. Voices for Healthy Kids supports the requirement for Complete Streets as part of their policy agenda (2019-2020).

Community Profiles focused on Complete Streets include:





Active Southern West Virginia, a non-profit organization partnered with a regional economic development authority, has emphasized walkability and bikeability as part of a broader strategy to improve the health of residents and the economy in coal-impacted communities. They have focused on a Complete Streets approach to improving active transportation, working with the City of Beckley on these initiatives since 2017. By establishing advocates in many levels of leadership and finding community champions, they were able to achieve success in the City of Beckley that has led to more expansive regional policy and built environment victories. Despite beginning with little to no funding, the work has been able to move forward through in-kind contributions and buy-in from the city, which has been named a Bronze Level Bike Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists in 2020. This is a story of work that began in a more urban area which has expanded to efforts in rural places and surrounding rural counties in southern West Virginia.

This interview was conducted with the Active Southern West Virginia Pedestrian, Bike, and Trail Coordinator, who is involved with this work and a former AmeriCorps Vista, who started this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Active Southern West Virginia sponsored an AmeriCorps Vista member who became aware of the need for infrastructure change and led this effort
- The Bike/Walk program was launched in conjunction with Active Southern West Virginia's physical activity programs. More information can be found here: <https://activeswv.org/complete-streets-to-improve-health/>



Community Profile

Beckley, West Virginia

Community Characteristics	Beckley	Raleigh County
Population ³	16,452	75,252
Total Area ³ , square miles	9.5	605.2
People per Square Mile ³	1,731.8	124.3
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$39,455	\$43,748
Poverty Rate ³	18.9%	18.6%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	73.2%	88.1%
• black:	21.4%	7.7%
• two or more races:	2.7%	2.0%
• other:	2.6%	2.1%
Median age ³ , years	41.6	42.2
Number of Schools ⁴	12	28
RUCA ⁵	1	1-2
Paid City/County Planner?	Yes	-
Part of an MPO?	Yes	-
University or college in community?	Yes	-

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. FRural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Community engagement and awareness of this work were kept high through hosting events such as monthly bike rides
- Increasing participation by local community leaders, such as city council, in this work led to advocacy by these leaders and increased broader community support



As soon as city council members, as soon as any people with leadership roles start participating, they become advocates immediately."

- It was important to convince community members of the importance of Complete Streets to help push the work to continue



What Barriers Emerged?

- It is difficult to bring new ideas to and educate an older population that has limited access to technology
- Environmental and weather challenges present issues with walkability
- The current prevailing culture in the community does not encourage active transportation

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Persistence and diligence with advocates and stakeholders were key
- Assisted other small communities with technical aspects of grant writing and acquiring funding
- Brought education to leadership that focused not only on the health-related outcomes but the economic impact as well
- Focused on capacity building within the community and stakeholders

It's also being thought leaders and talking about policy changes and talking about the way that you can get around your community. So with every step in the right direction we got, it also opened up the door to another thing we had to consider about how to create these bike and pedestrian action committees. And, of course, we chose action over advocacy because our name is Active Southern West Virginia. So as a purposeful choice that we made"

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- A full-time Trails Recreation Specialist job was created with the City of Beckley to monitor the trails system, walkability, and bikeability

- The Rails-to-Trails system has grown in Beckley and neighboring communities
- Funding was granted to place bike racks on the back of transit buses to reduce the need for a car
- Beckley was awarded a Bronze Level Bike Friendly Community award from the League of American Bicyclists in 2020, just the third such award in the state
- Four other small towns have signed Complete Streets resolutions as part of this work

Who Led This Work?

- Active Southern West Virginia led much of the work and worked hard to foster a partnership with the state DOT
- Relationships that were formed with town elected officials and the city council often allowed for progress

What Funding Supports This Work?

- The AmeriCorps Vista program member in the area was the only person spending professional time on Complete Streets for the first year or two
- In-kind donations and partnerships drove much of the beginning progress

And really the fact is I put my time into things we could do for free. We got donations. We got in-kind donations. We got partners for big events where they said 'Sure, you can set up a tent and do a bike valet.' We did it on zero budget and eventually we started getting support."

- Beckley became the first city in the area to budget dedicated funding for Complete Streets-related projects

For more information, please contact Erin Reid, Volunteer Director for Active Southern West Virginia at erin@activeswv.com.



This community was able to benefit from the experiences of other small communities doing similar work; finding examples of how policy work was executed in small towns as opposed to relying exclusively on examples from large cities and municipalities. They also fostered relationships with organizations such as the Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission, who has been involved in Complete Street works in the community since 2017. As a result, they were able to implement creative solutions to community engagement, such as planning community walking events and creating a Google Maps program that allows citizens to report issues and problems with infrastructure.

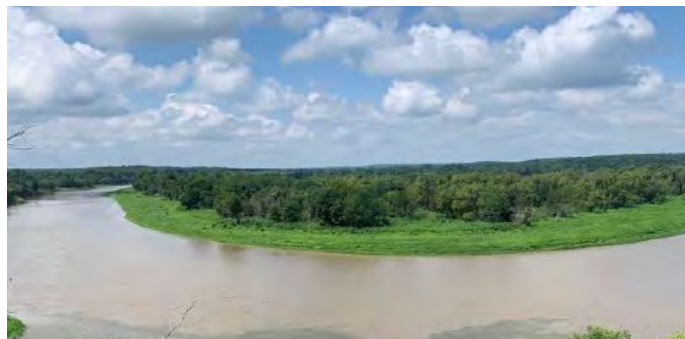


Community Profile

Osceola, Missouri

Community Characteristics	Osceola	St. Clair County
Population ³	1,032	9,370
Total Area ³ , square miles	0.9	674.8
People per Square Mile ³	1,146.7	13.9
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$26,224	\$38,870
Poverty Rate ³	28.0%	17.1%
Race/ethnicity ³		
· white:	82.9%	95.6%
· black:	4.5%	0.7%
· two or more races:	7.9%	2.3%
· other:	4.7%	1.4%
Median age ³ , years	44.0	50.3
Number of Schools ⁴	3	7
RUCA ⁵	8	8-10
Paid City/County Planner?	No	-
Part of an MPO?	No (part of a 70 county Regional Planning Commission)	
University or college in community?	No	-

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



This interview was conducted with the St. Clair County Economic Development Director for the Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission, who was involved with this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- In 2018, Osceola was a US EPA Healthy Places for Healthy People partner community, which sparked community interest in Complete Streets goals to meet community needs and wants to focus on improving quality of life
- The Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission was connected to the community through an economic development plan in the town to develop hiking trails as a tourist attraction

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Missourians for Responsible Transportation, (<https://www.movingmissouri.org/about/>) a statewide advocacy capacity building organization, connected them with resources from other small communities that had successfully implemented Complete Streets policies, these examples were key
- Seeing other rural communities working together also sparked confidence that municipalities in the area would be able to work together as well
- The Complete Streets plan was tailored specifically to this community and included steps that were reasonable and could realistically be completed
- Persistence in the face of negative feedback and listening to the community are key
- High school students became involved in encouraging active transportation and improving infrastructure

What Barriers Emerged?

- The community did not always see value in projects until the results were visible, such as seeing children using a safer walking trail instead of a busy highway
- Flooding and weather prevented some events from being held on new trails and in parks
- There is a larger than average elderly population in the community, which was a barrier to this work, although some of these residents are concerned about their safety on roadways

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- New events all along the trails were planned, including a health walk that invited members of the community such as the schools, the senior center, and any others that work with health to encourage community members to walk the trail and learn the benefits of walking regularly
- This work has shown older residents that their concerns were heard. This has fostered a sense of community and raised awareness for their needs and enhanced their safety



How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- High school students got involved through the Future, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) club, and took on a project to paint a walking trail on a side street
- An Osceola Safe Streets Map was created on Google Maps to allow community members to report roadway infrastructure issues like potholes or a need for a ditch and include pictures of the problem that the city can view
- Thanks to funding from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services grant, the Osceola Livable Streets Plan, (<http://kaysinger.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Osceola-Livable-Streets-Plan-2020.pdf>) was completed, which details the vision and recommendations for implementing the city's Policy

Who Led This Work?

- Decision making in the city occurred at the mayoral level and with the city alderman, who provide permission to move forward with projects

What Funding Supports This Work?

- A Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' Physical Activity and Nutrition (MPAN) Program grant for planning and demonstration projects supported much of this work, which was made possible by federal funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Program
- A retail sales tax was passed to fund street maintenance
- Some organizations and businesses in the community were also willing to contribute funds if asked

For more information, please contact Teresa Heckenlively, the St. Clair County Development Director for Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission at theckenlively@kaysinger.com.



This community has taken advantage of three rounds of five-year grants from the state Health Department, distributed by the St. Lawrence Health Initiative, and cultivated their relationship with the local university to obtain resources and support for Complete Streets work. A mixture of infrastructure and advocacy activities led to the adoption of a Complete Streets policy by the Village of Potsdam in 2014. Additionally, students from Clarkson University contributed to the work by completing pedestrian and infrastructure surveys as well as compiling the data and photos from these surveys for community use. The community environment and local public works capacity have been improved through the creation of an online GIS mapping system with digital layers that helps the municipality in planning and allocation of funds for construction.



This interview was conducted with the Community Coordinator from the St. Lawrence Health Initiative, who was familiar with and involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Grants from the New York State Department of Health awarded to the community and distributed by the St. Lawrence Health Initiative have included active transportation and recreation as a component to reduce chronic disease and obesity within the past three 5-year grant cycles
- The current grant, Creating Healthy Schools and Communities, focused on municipalities writing and adopting Complete Streets policies
- The St. Lawrence Health Initiative (<https://www.getthehealthyslc.org/>) was born out of a collaborative needs assessment by two local healthcare organizations 20 years ago



Community Profile

Potsdam, New York

Community Characteristics	Potsdam	St. Lawrence County
Population ³	9,154	108,913
Total Area ³ , square miles	4.4	2,678.6
People per Square Mile ³	2,080.5	40.7
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$32,282	\$50,940
Poverty Rate ³	26.5%	17.9%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	83.2%	92.8%
• black:	6.8%	2.4%
• two or more races:	2.2%	1.9%
• other:	7.8%	2.9%
Median age ³ , years	20.8	39.0
Number of Schools ⁴	1	18
RUCA ⁵	7	4-10
Paid City/County Planner?	Yes	–
Part of an MPO?	No	–
University or college in community?	Yes	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Clarkson University in Potsdam was a key partner that provided many resources to the community, which was key to sustaining the work
 - More information on Clarkson's partnership with the Village of Potsdam can be found in this flyer: https://webspace.clarkson.edu/~ebackus/C3G_files/20191008%20CHSC%20Year%204%20Success%20Story%20-%20Health%20Initiative.pdf
- Most of the funding to support these efforts came from the New York State Department of Health grants, distributed through the St. Lawrence Health Initiative
- The community not only focused on passing policies, but also on how to best use these policies for lasting and meaningful change

“Initially it was all about the policy. As the State has funded this work over the years, there's a realization, well, we need to do something with these policies. Initially, we could not buy concrete for sidewalks. Now we can buy concrete for sidewalks [for sidewalk repair and ADA-compliant curb cut construction]”

- Maintaining continual funding and human resources were key to keeping the work going

What Barriers Emerged?

- Some community members from surrounding towns in the county did not see the value in Complete Streets policy work if they personally did not have infrastructure needing to be maintained around them (e.g., those who did not have sidewalks near them, or who did not live in an area with many pedestrians)
- This work took time, and other emergency priorities such as COVID-19 and repairing water mains have come up unexpectedly, with a short construction season limiting projects that can be completed

“Nothing's impossible. Sometimes it takes a whole lot longer to get something accomplished than you ever thought. That's the thing, it just makes sense. Let's just do this.”

- Periodic changes in political leadership made it difficult to keep this work on the radar of decision makers

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Beginning the work in centralized locations like downtown areas showed community members the value of Complete Streets
- Keeping up with village leadership and remaining in constant communication about efforts and progress were important to help move forward amidst political changes and transitions

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- The physical environment visibly improved, including the addition of ADA-compliant sidewalk curb ramps, resulting in an increased awareness of pedestrian infrastructure needs in the community
- The passing of a new Complete Streets policy created additional opportunities for funding that were not initially available for this community

“There's more awareness certainly. It stages our municipalities for larger grant opportunities. Having this policy in place or wrapping it into a comprehensive plan. That one is a new comprehensive plan or a revised comprehensive plan. It opens the door to a whole other set of funding that they would not otherwise have access to.”

- Students from Clarkson University conducted pedestrian and infrastructure surveys for the previous three summers, which were digitalized and uploaded to the municipality's GIS system
- Photographs and infrastructure condition rankings in a GIS system and mapping tools were implemented to assist the Department of Public Works employees in planning construction and allocating resources

Who Led This Work?

- In the village, the mayor and Board of Trustees were the main decision makers
- The Department of Public Works head was an important partner as well as the senior Housing Authority Director
- The local AARP was a valued partner
- The local university, Clarkson University, was a key partner for assessments

What Funding Supports This Work?

- Several grants awarded to the St. Lawrence Health Initiative by the New York State Department of Health were then distributed through Requests for Proposals put out by St. Lawrence Health Initiative to municipalities for Complete Streets infrastructure work
- A small sidewalk repair budget has been made available by some municipalities in the area, but they are usually 50/50 match with homeowners
- Almost all funding (approximately 90%) came from different New York State Department of Health grants

For more information, please contact Frederick J. Hanss, Director of the Potsdam Planning and Development Office at fhanss@vi.potsdam.ny.us or Alexandra Jacobs-Wilke, Village of Potsdam Trustee at alexandramjacobs@gmail.com.



This community focused on taking advantage of every opportunity to encourage active transportation and make it as safe and accessible as possible. They have created a cultural shift resulting in a greater number of citizens becoming active in the city within the last 5 years. The mayor supported implementing a three quarters cent tax to help fund Complete Streets initiatives and progressively gained the support of the public. This work has led to the receipt of a grant from the Recreational Trails Program and a \$17.2 million grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation BUILD grant to rebuild road networks and pedestrian infrastructure, and they have recently added an outdoor recreation facility. Ruston also added requirements for developers to construct sidewalks in the public right of way and street trees on private land, enhancing public safety, accessibility, and walkability.



Community Profile

Ruston, Louisiana

Community Characteristics	Ruston	Lincoln Parish
Population ³	21,976	108,913
Total Area ³ , square miles	20.9	2,678.6
People per Square Mile ³	1,051.5	40.7
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$29,128	\$50,940
Poverty Rate ³	41.6%	17.9%
Race/ethnicity ³		
· white:	46.5%	92.8%
· black:	47.9%	2.4%
· two or more races:	1.6%	1.9%
· other:	4.0%	2.9%
Median age ³ , years	23.7	39.0
Number of Schools ⁴	8	18
RUCA ⁵	4	4-10
Paid City/County Planner?	Yes	–
Part of an MPO?	Yes	–
University or college in community?	Yes	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table.

MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



Information about Ruston's BUILD grant can be found here: <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/subdoc/901/build-fact-sheet2019-final.pdf>; https://www.ruston.org/downloads/monroe_street_corridor_project_final.pdf.

Information about the Recreational Trails Program for Louisiana can be found here: <https://www.lastateparks.com/grant-opportunities-for-outdoor-recreation/recreational-trails>.

This interview was conducted with the city planner and the engineering technology manager of Ruston, who are both involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- The community indicated a desire for increased safety, accessibility, and walkability
 - Specifically, a desire for increased roadway safety and the safety of active transportation
- There was support from the city mayor for funding opportunities and infrastructure change to increase pedestrian amenities and access

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Support from the town elected officials was key
- It was important to foster community buy-in and positive relationships with partners
 - They made sure to demonstrate benefits of this work to the community and provide education
- A well thought-out-plan was created and followed, including realistic milestones
- Two key elements were spending time to foster relationships and funding “Coffee and money”

“**Interviewer:** “What do you all think is the key to sustaining the work in your community?”

Response: “Coffee...And lots of money. That’s all it takes.”

- Use of quick-to-consume social media updates to increase communication with the community and encourage physical activity



What Barriers Emerged?

- Road ownership and communications had to be clarified with the state DOT
- Funding to support change was difficult to find and obtain
- Staff limitations within town political offices (too few staff, too many hats)
- Challenges to building relationships with the community and other potential partners

“And we have to gauge how often we knocked (on the doors of partners), because it’s people. I mean, like it’s an organization, but we have personal connections and relationships and like friendships, I think on good terms. It’s just like, we have a certain amount of asks that we can make. And I think we’ve been, that’s a learning curve that I had to do, just being new is you can’t just be knocking on the door all the time.”

- Concerns about the future possibility for turnover of elected officials that could lead to political priorities shifting away from Complete Streets programs

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Maintained a large voice of public support
- Gained support of the employees at the mayor’s and other city officials’ offices
- Gained support of local, state, and federal elected officials

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- The addition of an outdoor recreation facility
- A culture shift in the community that is more supportive of physical activity
- Additional opportunities to improve infrastructure
- Continued and increased public support and engagement from local business owners

“She owns a local gym and started hosting this 5k and you know, we have, we had fraternities and sororities do that for sure. But to have someone out of the public to organize it, I think shows that’s just a microcosm of like how people are responding and that they are wanting to do the legwork as well and respond and try to shift the culture to be more physically fit. And I thought that was pretty cool.”

Who Led This Work?

- The mayor and public works administration
- Partnership with the local university was key in this work

What Funding Supports This Work?

- A three-quarter cent sales tax
- Recreational Trails Program grant, administered by the Louisiana Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation
- U.S. DOT BUILD grant

For more information, please contact John Walz, City Planner, at jwalz@ruston.org.



This community has greatly benefitted from long term planning and clear prioritization. Goals for open spaces designed for recreation, including accessibility for community members who use wheelchairs or mobility scooters, were included in a comprehensive community development plan that is updated every 10 years (most recently in 2015). This plan allows for transportation funds to be used for infrastructure changes and encourages engineering to focus on accessibility and open spaces. Although community buy-in was low and progress was slow at first, improved public engagement activities were implemented to create positive momentum. Opportunities to solicit public opinion and recommendations were planned and replanned to adjust for pandemic safety needs.

This interview was conducted with a project engineer from the Public Works Department, who is involved with this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- The Growth Management Act of 1990 required that the city develop a comprehensive plan including goals for open spaces for recreation, connectivity, and congregation as well as a safety network for cyclists
- A Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), developed in 2013, set forth goals and projects to improve transportation mobility for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists
- The TIP also accounted for community members using wheelchairs or mobility scooters

“Wheelchairs, people who scooter around too. So, mobility scooters, everything like that. So, the reason we got into it is we feel and sometimes us engineering folks we have to be pulled along a little bit. Especially in a small town, but the groundwork was already there through our planning documents and public engagement process. I think that’s why we got started.”

- Learn more about the TIP Master Plan here: <https://www.sequimwa.gov/581/Transportation-Master-Plan>



Community Profile

Sequim, Washington

Community Characteristics	Sequim	Clallam County
Population ³	7,248	75,392
Total Area ³ , square miles	6.3	1,738.2
People per Square Mile ³	1,150.5	43.4
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$40,155	\$52,192
Poverty Rate ³	13.6%	14.5%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	86.0%	87.7%
• black:	1.7%	1.1%
• two or more races:	7.4%	3.9%
• other:	5.0%	7.3%
Median age ³ , years	56.5	50.8
Number of Schools ⁴	4	27
RUCA ⁵	4	4-10
Paid City/County Planner?	Yes	-
Part of an MPO?	No (part of a 4-county Regional Transportation Planning Organization)	
University or college in community?	Yes	-

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the Population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Recognizing the need for outreach and community engagement to help overcome community concerns and misperceptions about Complete Streets
- A comprehensive plan, required by state law, guided planning efforts and decision making that included priorities for recreational infrastructure projects
- State law mandates that the city update the comprehensive plan every 10 years
- Outreach and community engagement
- It was key to adapt urban engineering designs to fit the small-town context

What Barriers Emerged?

- Community buy-in initially was low, due to limited community education and outreach
- Community engagement efforts were severely hampered by the pandemic, although still underway and showing promise
 - A trial run of infrastructure changes to a street in the community to gain input from the community was halted due to COVID-19 precautions
- Misunderstanding among community members and fear that changes in infrastructure would affect the rural way of life causes resistance from the community

“Yeah, I would say the hook has been keep all the good parts of what we have right now with our transportation system but enhance it, make it safer... preserve all the things that they have right now. The rural feel, preserve the farm, the safety I feel right now, the ability to use the streets in any way I want. But they know change is coming. They know traffic has been increasing. They're concerned about safety, I think that's been the hook.”

- The current city council was reluctant to fund new programs due to limited funds and a declining economy, prioritizing the ability to show results instead of plans for programming

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Plans for pandemic-safe alternatives to holding a public meeting for infrastructure options were discussed
 - Zoom, webinar, or other methods of safely connecting with the public
- Focused on using the resources available to get tangible results to the city council with the goal of translating that into funding for additional plans



How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Outdated city standards that have been allowed to deviate are now being newly drafted in a more flexible manner, with the goal for them to be codified

“And the idea was to make this thing less dictatorial there would be a set of standards that would be almost elective, you know what I mean? There may be situations where we may be able to go with the multi-use path instead of sidewalks on both sides. Or standards for an arterial versus a collector versus the local street, but enough flexibility to choose sort of like a toolbox of options.”

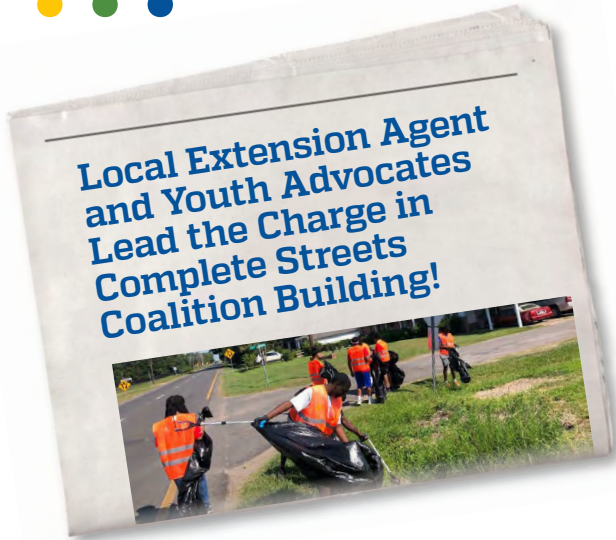
Who Led This Work?

- The public works director, city engineer, and senior management group went through the city council to get plans approved
- The informal power structure formed by interest groups and community groups had influence in getting the city council to make decisions

What Funding Supports This Work?

- The City's Transportation Department budget provided funding for consultants
- A Transportation Benefit District (<https://www.sequimwa.gov/225/Transportation-Benefit-District>) was established by City Council in 2008 to fund infrastructure improvements using a surcharge of 0.2% on retail sales which is devoted to transportation projects
- Infrastructure changes underground such as water is charged to the city utility budget

For more information, please contact Dave Nakagawara, Project Engineer at dnakagawara@sequimwa.gov.



This community has found success through key partnerships and identifying community needs for active transportation directly from community members, especially youth. Community support sustained through functioning coalitions and collaborations has created an environment where Complete Streets work is beginning to spread to other towns and parishes in the area. Partnerships with 4-H youth coalitions and Madison Parish Healthy Communities (https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/food_health/healthy-communities/madison%20healthy%20communities), (funded by the 1809 CDC High Obesity Program) has fostered youth involvement in policy, systems, and environment changes since 2016. Local politicians and elected officials are also involved in moving work forward. Most recently, visible work on roadways and improving crosswalks has led to increased community support and communication as well as encouraging neighboring communities to become involved in Complete Streets work.



Community Profile

Tallulah, Louisiana

Community Characteristics	Tallulah	Madison Parish
Population ³	6,851	11,306
Total Area ³ , square miles	2.8	624.3
People per Square Mile ³	2,446.8	18.1
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$26,351	\$30,350
Poverty Rate ³	44.3%	36.4%
Race/ethnicity ³		
· white:	19.7%	35.3%
· black:	79.7%	63.7%
· two or more races:	0.0%	0.3%
· other:	0.5%	0.7%
Median age ³ , years	34.1	35.2
Number of Schools ⁴	5	5
RUCA ⁵	7	7
Paid City/County Planner?	No	–
Part of an MPO?	Yes	–
University or college in community?	Yes	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



This interview was conducted with an assistant Extension Agent for SNAP-Ed at the AgCenter at Louisiana State University, who was knowledgeable about this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Collaboration between Madison Healthy Communities, the 4-H in Madison Parish, and youth and adult coalitions on active transportation identified barriers they wanted addressed
- Madison is one of seven Louisiana parishes considered “high” in obesity prevalence by the CDC (having 40% or higher obesity rate) that is part of the CDC High Obesity Program, led by the LSU Extension to support policy, systems, and environmental work addressing physical activity, active transportation, and healthy eating

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- It is key to ensure that coalition partners and community members are invested and able to sustain their work in the long run
- Engagement of community residents, including youth, through coalitions allowed for increased community education and buy-in
- Extension partnerships affiliated with Healthy Communities remain key in moving policy, systems, and environment efforts forward to improve physical activity opportunities and active transportation

What Barriers Emerged?

- COVID-19 caused the list of priorities to shift in the communities
- Funding or a funding plan is necessary to get community buy-in at first

“It was nothing for me to go to them and say “Hey, we have this opportunity,” but, their first question to me was, “Who going to pay for it?” So, nobody has actively said, “No, we don’t want that,” but they’re always going to ask, “Well, where’s the money?” which is completely understandable.”

- Funding may delay decision progress through the bureaucratic processes

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Healthy Communities distributed information on grants to the community and coalition partners, and the City of Tallulah then applied for these grants (example: an AARP Challenge Grant)
- The city or partner organizations often provided the labor if the funding could only pay for the supplies for infrastructure improvements
- Transparency and communication with the community were key to maintaining trust

- Talking to people and understanding the community helped foster a positive relationship that increased community buy-in

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Youth involvement and understanding of the importance of the built environment was increased through work with the MADH.Y.P.E. Coalition
 - More information on the MADH.Y.P.E. coalition can be found at <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/~media/system/3/6/b/1/36b1c04234e2daabefc0d5ed0b7f4553/madhype%20youth%20coalition%20successpdf.pdf> or <https://www.facebook.com/HealthyCommunityMadison>
- As the work became more visible to the community, the ability to meet with community members and discuss this work increased
- Neighboring communities became interested and invested in similar Complete Streets work as the town began visible policy, systems, and environment work

Who Led This Work?

- Elected officials (the mayor, mayor’s assistant, the police jury, the council president, and the city council) were the main decision makers
- Healthy Communities coalition members worked together to develop projects that were reviewed and approved by city/elected officials
- The state DOT is an important decision maker where roadways are involved

What Funding Supports This Work?

- A private donor contributed donated land to the community of Tallulah, and the town decided to collaborate with Madison Parish to use this land for a “pocket park” along the same street where Complete Streets work is planned
 - More information on this work can be found in this article: <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/rbogren/articles/page1595961980697>
- The city has applied for an AARP grant to help pay for the extension of crosswalks
- A CDC High-Obesity Program (HOP1809) grant supported this work, which was carried out by the Louisiana State University AgCenter in 7 parishes, including Madison Parish

For more information, please contact Joy Sims, Assistant Extension Agent for Healthy Communities at the LSU AgCenter at JSims@AgCenter.lsu.edu.

Safe Routes to School

As defined by the Safe Routes Partnership, “Safe Routes to School is an initiative that works to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children to walk and bicycle to and from schools. The goal of Safe Routes to School is to get more children walking and bicycling to school, improve kids’ safety, and increase health and physical activity.”⁶

Community Profiles focused on Safe Routes to School include:



As part of their policy agenda (2019-2020), Voices for Healthy Kids supports policies and efforts that promote the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCSS) model to support and build broad and inclusive healthy, school environments, particularly in marginalized or under-resourced communities. They work to support and build healthy schools for all children regardless of where they live or go to school. Within these efforts they support physical activity opportunities that promote active transportation policy including safe routes to school programs.

You can learn more about the Safe Routes Partnership and Safe Routes to School at: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school>.





This community was able to capitalize on the local Cannon Valley Trail that was built 20 years ago and a statewide initiative established 10 years ago that focused on improving overall health through policy, systems, and environment change. The statewide program filtered down to a community level with enough flexibility to allow partnerships and relationships to drive this work, which began in April 2018. As a result of this flexibility, local business engagement has increased, biking and walking to school awareness has increased, and advocacy campaigns for active transportation were able to be implemented.

More information about the work done by Goodhue County and Cannon Falls can be found on pages 3 and 4 of the following flyer: <https://www.co.goodhue.mn.us/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/7616?fileID=15127>.

This interview was conducted with the Public Health Coordinator for Goodhue County, who was involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Minnesota passed legislation establishing the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ship/index.html>) 10 years ago with the goal of improving health by making it easier to be active by walking and biking, eat nutritiously, and live tobacco free
- Goodhue County and the town of Cannon Falls formed a partnership using SHIP funding to begin making improvements to the farmers market, which led into Safe Routes to School work and a discussion around Complete Streets policy.



Community Profile

Cannon Falls, Minnesota

Community Characteristics	Cannon Falls	Goodhue County
Population ³	4,054	46,246
Total Area ³ , square miles	4.5	756.6
People per Square Mile ³	900.9	61.1
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$65,943	\$66,800
Poverty Rate ³	7.5%	9.3%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	97.8%	94.0%
• black:	0.0%	1.3%
• two or more races:	1.9%	2.0%
• other:	0.3%	2.6%
Median age ³ , years	37.8	42.2
Number of Schools ⁴	–	12
RUCA ⁵	7	2-10
Paid City/County Planner?	No	–
Part of an MPO?	No (part of an 11-county Regional Development Organization/Area Transportation Partnership)	
University or college in community?	No	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- A state-wide Safe Routes to School program with the flexibility to be adapted in rural counties and communities that often have a focus on relationships and partnerships within the community
- The mayor, city staff, and the city council supported this work
- They built off the established success and culture of having a well-established multiuse trail (Cannon Valley Trail)
- An emphasis was placed on partnering with communities to adopt policy, systems, and environmental change
- Take the time to learn from and listen to community members

“...take the time to take a look at the community, what works what's not, talk to the residents, talk to the students and find out from them, which we have always done from the beginning been encouraged to do instead of going in and saying, “This is what you need to do, and I'm the expert at this, so, listen to me.””

- Cannon Falls stories and successes were shared with other communities which allowed them to build a template and network for sharing resources
- Communication through the local newspaper, city council and school board meetings, and social media all contributed to building this network

What Barriers Emerged?

- Turnovers and transitions in key city leadership positions such as the Public Works Director stalled policy change and the implementation of the “Watch for Me Cannon Falls,” a pedestrian and bike campaign based on “Watch for Me North Carolina”
- Data collection was difficult because the work is done through a volunteer group
- Funding was the biggest challenge

“Major infrastructure change is major dollars”
And if it's a grant, applying for collecting the data, having everything that's needed to receive those grants. It's a challenge when you are talking to a small group of people”

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- They used the Safe Routes to School Handbook as a guide for the community, as well as gathering data and information from the Minnesota Bike Alliance, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and from other counties funded through SHIP

- It was important to find local advocates who felt strongly about making it easier and safer for people to walk, bike, and roll
- A main goal of the partnership was to be community-driven and sustainable through community support

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Local business involvement increased through the Bike Benefits Program, as demonstrated by an ice cream shop that implemented a 50-cent discount if the customer biked to the store. More details about the Bike Benefits Program can be found here: <http://bikecannonfallsmn.com/bicycle-benefits-program/>
- Awareness of biking as a safe activity increased and community members recognized that it is safe for children to walk or bike to school
- Education and advocacy campaigns were implemented in partnership with schools to raise awareness, such as Bike to School Day or Walk to School Day

“...We worked with another community and designed walk, bike, roll maps that put the community on the map, then had figured out how long it would take to walk or bike from certain locations and then sent that out to all the parents. So, they knew that from this part to school may take 10 minutes. And then you know, we all encouraged them to ride or walk with their students to find the safest route for them to go with those kinds of things.”

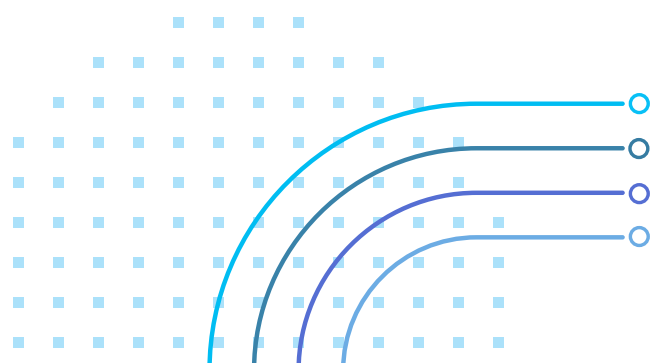
Who Led This Work?

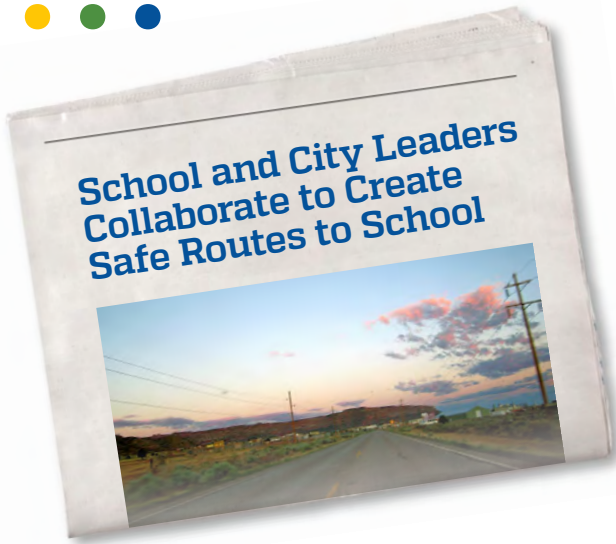
- The local bicycle advocacy group, city staff, city council, and school board were all key decision-makers in this work
- The county school board, county public works, and Minnesota DOT were all engaged in projects involving roadways

What Funding Supports This Work?

- SHIP provided funding for projects connected to the statewide initiative
- Advocacy and trail monitoring funds came from purchased trail passes and membership fees for a newly-established local chapter of the Minnesota Bike Alliance

For more information, please contact David Anderson, Public Health Coordinator at david.anderson@co.goodhue.mn.us.





Through effective grant writing, this community has been able to secure funding to increase the safety of roads for children to walk to school. A need for safer roads was identified by school principals two years ago and was backed by a new mayor and city manager, who assisted in applying for a Utah DOT Safe Routes to School grant. Since then, two Safe Routes to School infrastructure grants have been awarded and another is being completed using Community Development Block Grant funds.

This interview was conducted with the City Manager, who was involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- Community members realized that roads to school were unsafe for children to walk, particularly for lower income families who could not afford to drive their kids to school
- When a new mayor was elected, she hired a new city manager who began applying for grants at the request of school principals

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- An easy application process for the Utah Safe Routes to School

“The only thing that I would advise in terms of policy makers is that the communities that are the worst affected have the least administrative resources to manage and apply for grants. So, I think that Utah has done a fantastic job on their SRTS application. It wasn't really burdensome.”

- A city manager who prepared grant applications
- A positive working relationship with the Utah DOT that led to funding

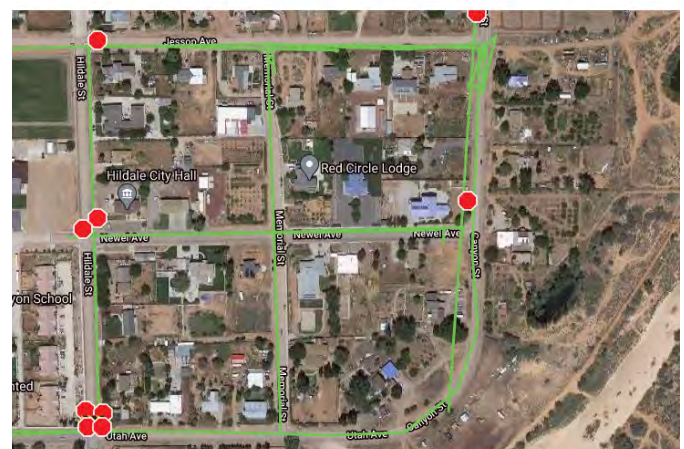


Community Profile

Hildale, Utah

Community Characteristics	Hildale	Washington County
Population ³	2,910	165,811
Total Area ³ , square miles	5.6	2,426.3
People per Square Mile ³	519.6	68.3
Median Annual Household Income ³	N/A	\$59,839
Poverty Rate ³	47.6%	11.8%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	100%	90.5%
• black:	0.0%	0.7%
• two or more races:	0.0%	2.1%
• other:	0.0%	6.7%
Median age ³ , years	15.8	37.1
Number of Schools ⁴	2	58
RUCA ⁵	2	1-4
Paid City/County Planner?	Yes	–
Part of an MPO?	No	–
University or college in community?	No	–

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.



What Barriers Emerged?

- The principals of the school district had been urging the city to apply for Safe Routes to School funding for two years, but the City did not apply initially
- Until recently, single property owners or religious groups often made decisions about public infrastructure investments for the community as opposed to the city council
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) contain a large number of regulatory requirements, including a 20% match, and detailed grant management that is difficult in a small community with limited administrative capacity

“So, I think there’s a balance there between asking for enough information to make good choices with funding and being fiscally responsible but really thinking about the administrative burden that you’re putting on those communities.”

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- The state of Utah has created a Safe Routes to School grant process that is not too burdensome, so smaller communities in desperate need of this funding but without much administrative capacity are able to apply
- The new mayor supported the school principals’ desire to apply for the Safe Routes to School grant by permitting the city manager to use his time to prepare the application

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- One of two Safe Routes to School projects has been completed and students currently use the new sidewalk
- Two houses in disrepair were demolished and a new house was built in their place by a town resident as a result of the new sidewalk

“...I think seeing public improvements inspires private improvements. So, I would say that’s one of the peripheral benefits.”

- The community is one block away from having one complete safe pedestrian traversable road through the city

Who Led This Work?

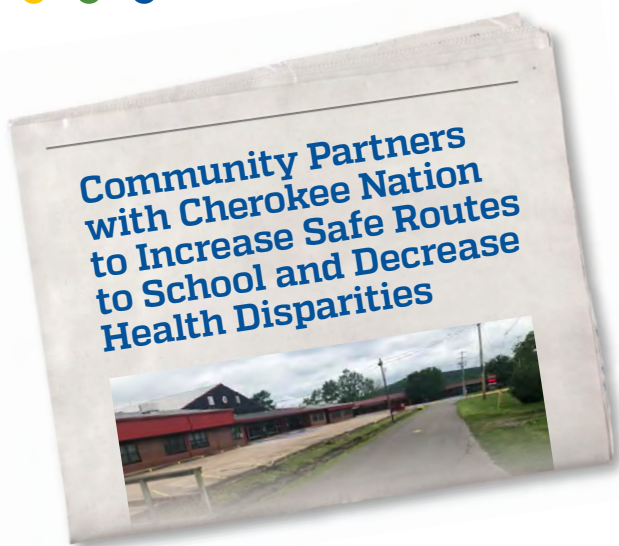
- The city council members are the ultimate decision makers, but the city council solicits public opinion through town hall meetings
- The city manager handled the application process

What Funding Supports This Work?

- Safe Routes to School is funded by the Utah DOT
 - A news article detailing the search for grant money by Hildale can be found here: <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2019/07/23/arh-hildale-seeks-grant-money-to-address-dangerous-sidewalks-intersections-for-kids-walking-to-school/#.YDkIsS2ZPxV>
- Community Development Block Grant program (US Housing and Urban Development administered by the State of Utah), for which Hildale was able to creatively come up with the required 20% matching funds
- Hildale City agreed to match the Safe Routes to School up to \$50,000 with \$25,000 of that pledged by the property owners living on that road

For more information, please contact John Barlow, City Manager, at johnb@hildalecity.com.





Working closely with the Cherokee Nation, this community created a safe route to school for children in the area. Discussion and planning began in 2017 after receiving funding from the Oklahoma Safe Routes to School program. Walkability surveys were conducted with children in the community to build upon information from an existing community health needs assessment conducted by the Cherokee Nation that identified a need for environmental changes like sidewalks and crosswalks. Using this information and additional funding from the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust and the CDC High Obesity Program funding granted to Oklahoma State University Extension, the community was able to make needed environmental changes to increase safety for children on their way to school.

This interview was conducted with a Public Health Educator from the Cherokee Nation Public Health, who is involved in this work.

Why and How Did This Work Get Started?

- The community began doing walkability surveys performed by 4th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade children and a few adults established a need for sidewalks and crosswalks as many children walk to school by themselves.

We have them pick an area that they frequently walk, and they start on whatever corner, and they tell us where that is. Then we have... I want to say there's eight questions on there: is it safe, did you feel safe on your walk? And if not, then we have X amount of reasons they could mark. And if it's none of those reasons, then they can tell us in a comment box. But is it well-lit, is it clean, do you feel safe, is the neighborhood safe, is there a sidewalk, was there too much traffic, did people abide by traffic laws?"



Community Profile

Stilwell, Oklahoma

Community Characteristics	Stilwell	Adair County
Population ³	4,045	22,220
Total Area ³ , square miles	3.2	573.3
People per Square Mile ³	1,264.1	38.8
Median Annual Household Income ³	\$26,721	\$34,695
Poverty Rate ³	31.9%	27.8%
Race/ethnicity ³		
• white:	33.2%	42.1%
• black:	0.2%	0.2%
• American Indian or Alaskan Native:	50.3%	44.1%
• two or more races:	15.5%	10.1%
• other:	0.8%	3.5%
Median age ³ , years	30.6	37.2
Number of Schools ⁴	9	18
RUCA ⁵	9	5-9
Paid City/County Planner?	No	-
Part of an MPO?	No	-
University or college in community?	No	-

Poverty rate is defined here as the percent of individuals in the population that were determined to meet the poverty status definition by the U.S. Census, based on total family income before taxes and poverty thresholds adjusted for using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). RUCA = rural-urban community area. As the RUCA increases, so does the rurality of the area. A RUCA of 1-3 indicates a metropolitan area, 4-6 indicates a micropolitan area, 7-9 indicates a small town, and 10 indicates a rural area. Rural is defined many ways, including small population size and RUCAs between 4-10; both are provided in this table. MPO = metropolitan planning organization.

- The town received an Oklahoma DOT Safe Routes to School grant, which triggered the walkability surveys to determine where the funding would be best utilized
- Cherokee Nation also performed a health needs assessment to determine community needs for healthy food and physical activity opportunities to draw links to chronic illness disparities

What Were the Keys to Success for This Community?

- Several key partnerships with the Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma State University Adair County Extension, and the Adair County Community Health Coalition
- Continued and regular contact with the community maintains acceptance and buy-in

“As long as we are involved with our community, they’re going to continue to be accepting of what we’re doing. And as long as we’re doing it here in town where it betters these families and it increases their access to school, to the library, to the park, I think that that’ll be key in us being supported in what we do.”

- The relationship between the schools, the city, and Cherokee Nation facilitated the addition of safety features like crosswalks in school zones to protect children on their way to school
- Training and participation in the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute was key

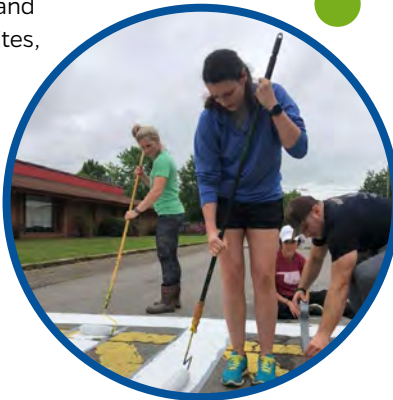
“Through the CDC Community Transformation Grant, the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute (WALC) assessed the community and created a report of low hanging fruit activities for the City of Stilwell. This provided guidance on low-cost changes to create a safer routes to school”

What Barriers Emerged?

- It was not safe for children to walk or bike to school at some of the more rural schools, potentially calling into question relevancy of this work by some
- The previous political environment made moving work forward difficult
- The city no longer had a city planner, who had also functioned as the grant writer
- Funding was one of the largest barriers

How Did They Move Past These Barriers?

- Identified safe pick-up and drop-off routines and sites, appropriate crosswalk locations, speed bump and four-way stop locations, and safe routes to take after school
- Continued planning by seeking out funding opportunities, included working with partners such as the Oklahoma State University Extension, who was funded by a CDC High Obesity Program grant to work in Adair and Muskogee Counties
- Relationships with new incoming political leaders like the mayor and city council members were prioritized to open the possibility of moving forward with the work



- Verbiage in policies was written to avoid appearing completely binding, so council members were more likely to support big projects

“We had a couple on the council that were a little unsure of it at first just because of the wordage of it, they didn’t know. That’s why we changed a lot of it to be less binding. We added a lot of that “when feasible” or “when the opportunity arises,” or things like “in the future”... because they didn’t want to lock themselves into something they couldn’t commit to, that they couldn’t actually finish...”

How Has This Work Benefitted the Community?

- Safety features like crosswalks, four-way stops, pedestrian safety signs, and school zone signs have been added in roadways to make the area safer
- The number of children walking to school has increased
- Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets resolutions were passed
- Due to the successes in Stilwell, other neighboring towns are initiating their own efforts

Who Led This Work?

- The city council, city office, or mayor have the major official decision-making power
- Members of the Adair County Community Health Coalition influenced decision making
- A prominent local business owner whose family has history deeply rooted in the community also carried a lot of power within the community, and heavily contributed to the development of the local park
 - This family has a foundation that sponsors help for children for any school that requests their help, as well as sponsoring city needs that fit within their foundation guidelines

What Funding Supports This Work?

- The Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Adair County Healthy Living Program
 - Learn more here: <https://tset.ok.gov/>
- Oklahoma State University Extension CDC High Obesity Program grant
 - Learn more here: <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/hop-1809/hop-1809-recipients.html#Oklahoma>
- The Oklahoma Safe Routes to School grant was used to fund environmental changes

For more information, please contact Shaina Kindle, Public Health Educator at shaina-kindle@cherokee.org.



References

1. Community Preventive Services Task Force. The Community Guide. Physical Activity: Built environment approaches combining transportation system interventions with land use and environmental design. December 2016. <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/sites/default/files/assets/PA-Built-Environments.pdf>.
2. Umstattd Meyer MR, Moore JB, Abildso C, Edwards MB, Gamble A, & Baskin ML. Rural active living: A call to action. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*. 2016;22(5):E11-E20. doi: [10.1097/PHH.0000000000000333](https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000000333)
3. United States Census Bureau. (2019). *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/> (access date: Jan. 22, 2021)
4. Common Core of Data Search for Public Schools. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/> (access date: Nov. 1, 2020)
5. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2020). *2010 Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, ZIP code file* [data set]. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes/> (access date: Jan. 31, 2021)
6. Safe Routes to School. Safe Routes Partnership. Retrieved from <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school> (access date: Dec. 23, 2020)



Photos courtesy of local residents of PARC communities from Beckley, West Virginia, Cannon Falls, Minnesota, Ennis, Montana, Hebron, Nebraska, Hildale, Utah, Osceola, Missouri, Potsdam, New York, Rutherford County, North Carolina, Stilwell, Oklahoma, and Tallulah, Louisiana.

