STEP IT UP: EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY DESIGN AND ACTIVE TRAVEL IN BIG SKY COUNTRY

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Objectives

• Describe a frontier state’s technical assistance program to improve community design and active travel
• Describe the role of collaborative partnerships both at the state and local level
• Major takeaways and next steps
Montana is ranked:

- 4th largest in land area
- 44th by population
- 48th by population density
- 46/56 counties classified as frontier
Biking and Walking Potential in Rural Communities

• Small towns are ideally sized to maximize bicycling and walking potential

• Average walking trip in US = 1.2 miles (50% less than half mile)

• Average bicycling trip in US = 4 miles (60% less than 2 miles)
Goal: To encourage policy and environmental changes that help make communities safer, more accessible and inviting places for people to walk or bike or take public transportation (if available).
Building Active Communities Initiative (BACI)

• Action Institute
• Resources
• Advisors
• Webinar Series
• Mini-grants
• Technical Assistance
• Evaluation
Active Community Policy/Plans

- Complete Streets Policy
- Sidewalk Policy
- Infill Policy
- Bicycle/Pedestrian/Active Transportation Plan
- Mixed Use Zoning
- School Siting Policy
- Parks and Recreation Plan
- Joint Use Agreement
- Worksite Wellness Policy (supporting active commutes)
Walking Audit
Utilizing Transit
Action Planning
Building Active Communities Workbook
Building Active Communities: Resource Guide

Montana
Building Active Communities
Resource Guide

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Montana Complete Streets Toolkit

- Resource
- Planning Guidance
  - Case Studies
- Design Guidance
- For City/County/Town staff,
- Elected officials
- Citizens
The Complete Streets Toolkit

The Sidewalk Corridor

Description
Sidewalks are the most fundamental element of the walking network, as they provide an area for pedestrian travel separated from vehicle traffic. A variety of considerations are important in sidewalk design, including adequate and accessible facilities that can lead to increased numbers of people walking, improved safety, and the creation of social spaces.

The Sidewalk Corridor

Local Details
The width and design of sidewalks will vary depending on street context, functional classification, and pedestrian demand. Following preferred widths of each sidewalk zone according to general street type. Standardizing sidewalk guidelines for different areas of the community, dependent on the above listed factors, ensures a minimum level of quality for all sidewalks. All sidewalks are recommended to include a furnishing or planting zone that can act as snow storage in the winter.

Discussion
Sidewalks should be more than areas to travel; they should provide places for people to interact. There should be places for standing, sitting, and sitting. Sidewalks should contribute to the character of neighborhoods and main streets, strengthen their identity, and be an area where adults and children can safely participate in public life.

Additional References and Guidelines

Materials and Maintenance
Sidewalks are typically constructed out of concrete and are separated from the roadway by a curb or gutter and sometimes a landscaped boulevard. Colored, patterned, or stamped concrete can add distinctive visual appeal.

Additional Locations and Notes
It is important to provide adequate width along a sidewalk corridor. Two people should be able to walk side-by-side and pass a third comfortably. In areas of high demand sidewalks should contain adequate width to accommodate the high volumes and different walking speeds of pedestrians. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires a 4-foot clear width in the pedestrian zone plus 5 feet passing areas every 200 feet.

Six feet of through zone width enables two pedestrians (including wheelchair users) to walk side-by-side, or to pass each other comfortably.
BACI Advisors

- Western Transportation Institute
- MT Department of Commerce
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Montana Disability and Health Program
- Bike Walk Montana
- Alta Planning + Design
- Future West
- Flathead County Public Health Department
- MSU Extension Community Development
- City of Helena, Engineering
Community Outcomes

- Glendive—Master Trails Plan (2014)
- Great Falls—Growth Policy and Transportation Plan updates (2014)
- Shelby—Safe and Accessible Streets policy (2014)
- Sidney—Safe and Accessible Streets policy (2014)
- Hamilton—Complete Streets Policy (2014)
- Belgrade—Safe and Usable Streets Policy (2014)
- Polson—Safe and Accessible Streets Policy (2015)
- Glendive—Safe and Accessible Streets Policy (2015)
Community Outcomes

• Dawson County—Complete Streets Policy
• Ranked #3 by the National Complete Streets Coalition of over 70 policies adopted in 2014
EVALUATION

Action Institute
Resources
Webinars
Advisors
Technical Assistance
Outcomes
Major Takeaways

• The health sector cannot solve the health crisis alone
• Building multi-sector capacity is critical
• Adapt evidence-based strategies to a local context
• Enhance local efforts through better coordination at the state level
BACI-Specific Takeaways

• Bring a critical mass of the right people to the table
• Build knowledge, skills and confidence
• Allow time for peer to peer learning as well as team building
• Follow-up support is critical
• Share successes and challenges
Next Steps

• State-Level Collaborative for Walkable Communities
  • MDT, DOC, DPHHS, Bike Walk Montana, State Parks

• Action Institute 2.0

• Walkable Communities Toolbox
THANK YOU!

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