



Building a Diverse Transportation Network and a Healthier North Carolina

Secretary Gene Conti, NCDOT

Environmental Health Summit, RTP



A substantial body of research shows that certain aspects of the transportation infrastructure – public transit, greenways and trails, sidewalks and safe street crossings near schools, bicycle paths, traffic-calming devices, and sidewalks that connect schools and homes to destinations – are associated with more walking and bicycling, greater physical activity and lower obesity rates.

Transportation investments can either support or impede walking and bicycling in neighborhoods and near schools, depending on how they are implemented.

-Robert Wood Johnson Foundation





The Challenge

A transportation network that favors vehicles has contributed to a decline in more physically active modes of travel.

- Of commuters in NC, 1.9% walk; 0.2 % bike

- % of school age children nationwide who commute to school by walking or bicycling decreased by 68% from 1969 to 2001.





The Challenge

- 60% of NC adults would increase their physical activity if their community had more accessible sidewalks or trails for walking or bicycling.
- States with higher levels of bicycling and walking have a greater percentage of adults who meet the recommended 30 plus minutes of daily physical activity.





Choices are Key

Making smart choices when it comes to how you get around can improve physical health.

NCDOT has a key role in working with communities to provide the transportation options that fit their needs.





NCDOT Complete Streets Policy

Making streets safe and accessible for **all** users
(pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and vehicles)

Requires NCDOT to:

- Consider and incorporate multi-modal alternatives
- Consider needs of all users on new and improved infrastructure projects
- Collaborate with local areas to ensure local plans and options are included





Complete Streets: Benefits

- Improving safety
- Making it easier for travelers to get where they need to go
- Encouraging the use of alternative forms of transportation
- Increasing connectivity between streets and transit systems
- Improved statewide quality of life through better air quality, economic development





Examples of Complete Streets in N.C.





South Blvd and Woodlawn Rd Intersection Enhancement (Charlotte)





Clanton Rd “Road Diet” (Charlotte)





DeWitt Lane – Extension of Existing Street (Charlotte)





Hillsborough Street Redesign (Raleigh)





Wrightsville Ave. Resurfacing (Wilmington)





Randall Pkwy Widening (Wilmington)





Ann St Bicycle Boulevard (Wilmington)





Obstacles to Implementation

Auto-oriented mindset

Bureaucracy/implementation by individual mode

Funding challenges





Bicycle and Pedestrian Investments

Safe Routes to Schools

Fall 2009 (2nd year of program in NC): \$3.6 million to 22 municipalities and local agencies

Efforts promoted by programs such as Safe Routes to Schools have been linked to both increases in percentage of students who walked to schools and reductions in percentage being driven.

- *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation “Active Transportation” report*





Bicycle and Pedestrian Investments

Safe Routes to Schools

Projects included:

- Constructing new sidewalks and greenways
- Installing school zone signs, bicycle parking racks and pedestrian signals
- Constructing wheelchair ramps and marking crosswalks to improve intersections





Bicycle and Pedestrian Investments

ARRA projects

Ocracoke Bicycle and Pedestrian Project
Neuse River Greenway, Johnston County
Cross City Trail Phase III, Wilmington

Planning grant initiative

103 municipalities awarded \$2.6 million to
develop bicycle and pedestrian plans

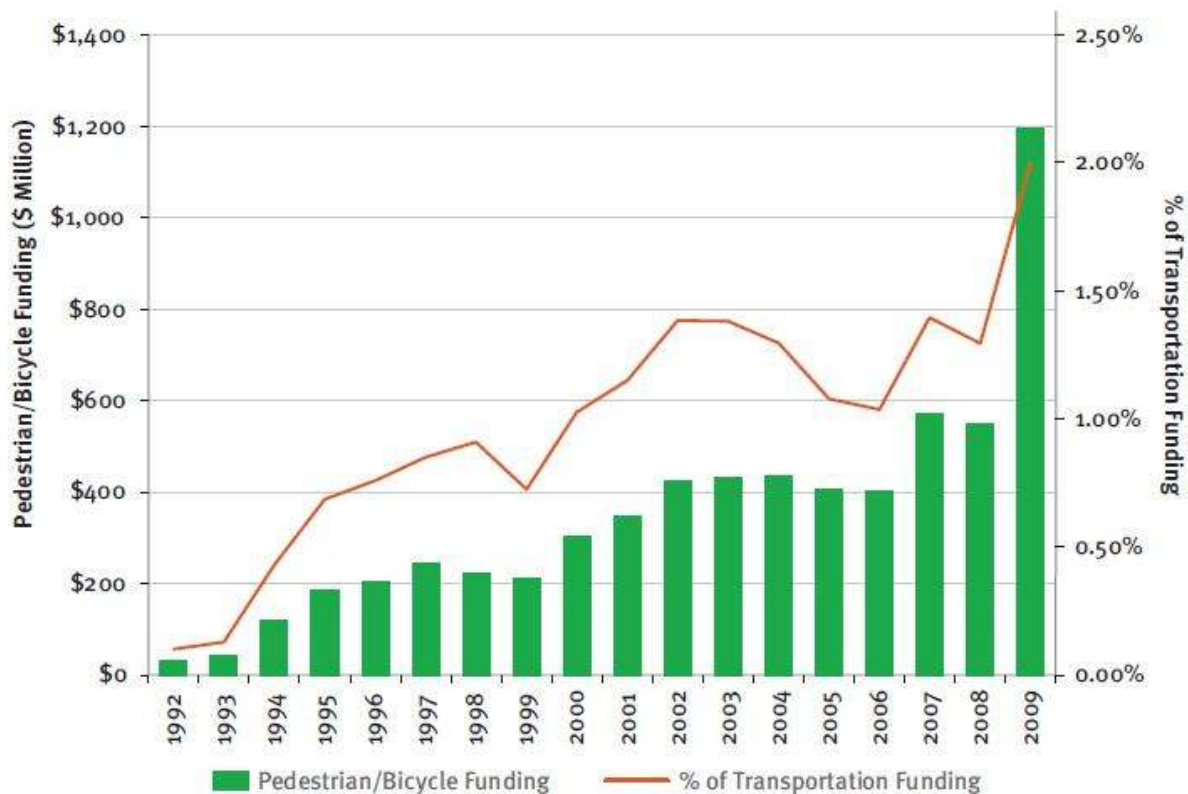




Investments Pay Off

As funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities has increased...

Federal Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding, 1992–2009





Biking and walking has ALSO increased.

Number of Trips Taken by Bicycling and Walking, 1990-2009





Transit – Another important part of a diverse network

“People who used public transportation for any reason were less likely to be sedentary or obese than adults who did not use public transportation.” –*Robert Wood Johnson report*

“According to one study of obesity-related medical costs, the extra walking related to transit use was estimated at a lifetime savings of \$5,500 per person in 2007 dollars.”

Robert Wood Johnson report





Charlotte Light Rail Study

American Journal of Preventative Medicine,
August 2010

Surveyed 498 people living in one mile
radius of South Corridor Light Rail line in
Charlotte

Light Rail users experienced significant
reduction in BMI and were less likely to
become obese compared to those in the
study area who did not use Light Rail.





Transit Investments

Urban Circulator and Bus Livability Grant

\$25 million awarded for Charlotte Streetcar Project

64 new bus routes and services added last year

Employees ride free

Triangle Transit and CATS GoPass Program; City of Asheville PassPort Program

Free urban circulator routes

R-Line (Raleigh) and Bull City Connector (Durham)





Conclusion

- Addressing the decades-long decline in walking, biking and transit use requires changing the physical characteristics of our communities.
- Policies and funding that support these types of infrastructure investments can help slow and perhaps even reverse this decline.

