

# Priority: Opportunities for Active Transportation and Physical Activity

**Goal: Improve safe, affordable, and accessible active transportation, physical, and social activity.**

## **What are Opportunities for Active Transportation and Physical Activity and Why are They Important?**

Regular physical activity has significant benefits across the lifespan, including reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and several types of cancers, and can lead to stronger muscles and bones, improved mental health and sleep function, and increased life expectancy.

The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends adults of all ages and abilities engage in moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week, or vigorous-intensity physical activity for 75 minutes per week. Approximately 5.5 million adults in New York State do not meet this recommendation and over 4 million do not participate in any leisure-time physical activity. Physical activity indicators demonstrate disparities by race, ethnicity, income, education, and ability. Participation in any physical activity is lowest among adults who are Hispanic (63.7%), have a household income of less than \$25,000 (56.7%), have less than a high school education (52.3%), or are living with disability (58.4%).<sup>148</sup>

Not all individuals have the same access or ability to engage in physical activity in the same ways. Disparities are often related to structural inequities such as lack of accessible opportunities or built environments that are unsafe or not designed inclusively for all populations. The opportunity to engage in physical activity is most often directly influenced by factors in the social and physical environments. Social factors may include income and education inequality and community traits such as social cohesion and perceived benefits and attitudes towards physical activity. Factors in the physical environment may include access to public green spaces and trails, provision of safe walking and biking routes, and residential design that can promote walkable neighborhood routes, including more compact, mixed-use neighborhood design.




Active transportation, such as walking or biking to get from one place to another, provides opportunities for people to be physically active as part of their daily lives. This is easier to do when everyday destinations are connected by activity-friendly routes and close to one another. By focusing on improvements to transportation systems such as pedestrian or bicycle paths and promoting land use and community design that supports Smart Growth to expand access to community or neighborhood destinations such as stores, businesses, health care, civic activities, community centers, and parks, NYS can increase opportunities for active transportation and physical activity.






**SMART(IE) Objective:**










**21.0 Increase the prevalence of physical activity among all adults aged 18 years and older from 73.9% to 77.6%.**










**21.1 Increase the prevalence of physical activity among all adults aged 18 years and older with an annual household income less than \$25,000 from 56.7% to 59.5%.**











Desired Outcome	Indicator	Data Source	Population	Baseline	Target
Increase prevalence of physical activity in adults	Percentage of adults who are physically active, aged 18 years and older	BRFSS	Adults (Aged 18 years and older)	73.9% (2023)	77.6% (2030)
			<b>Subpopulation of Focus</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>
			Adults with an annual household income less than \$25,000	56.7% (2023)	59.5% (2030)











Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
 <p><b>Featured Intervention:</b> Work with partners to establish or update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master plans</li> <li>• Land use and zoning policies and plans</li> <li>• State pedestrian, bicycle, and parks and recreation plans</li> <li>• Housing, conservation, or economic development plans<sup>300</sup></li> </ul> 	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p><b>Featured Intervention:</b> Collaborate with multidisciplinary partners to implement plans, policies, and strategies to support activity-friendly communities. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies (Complete Streets, Safe Routes, and Vision Zero policies, including relevant city, school district, or parks and recreation department policies. Also includes policies to promote mixed land uses, transit-oriented development, and residential density)</li> <li>• Plans (Active transportation, trails, and greenways plans; Complete Streets, Safe</li> </ul>	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
<p>Routes for All, and Vision Zero action plans; Incentives for activity-friendly project evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects (demonstration projects with evaluation measurement, including speed reduction, increased active travel, or use of new places; placemaking; bike racks, crosswalks, or traffic calming measures; new or improved sidewalks, protected bike lanes, transit routes)</li> <li>• Codes (zoning, building, subdivision, or other codes, including those that integrate land use regulations with other municipal goals, or regulate the form of buildings rather than land uses, such as Form-Based Codes and activity-friendly districts)</li> <li>• Programs (safe routes to school or parks)</li> <li>• Systems (increase transit, bicycle, and pedestrian network connectivity and access, park coverage and accessibility, and incentives for activity-friendly project evaluation or supportive land development)</li> <li>• Community (innovative ideas and key priorities to design communities for physical activity that are community-sourced and created, demonstrating that residents are valued and appreciated)<sup>300</sup></li> </ul> 			
 <p>Foster environments conducive to healthy lifestyles and living by providing access to outdoor physical and recreational activities and everyday destinations, including but not limited to libraries, parks, farmers' markets, schools.<sup>301,302</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	Number of new healthy outdoor spaces created, number of improvements made, data regarding reach relevant to outreach activities (e.g., number of community events in parks, libraries, etc. and attendance), utilization of community sites conducive to healthy lifestyles
 <p>Establish, expand, or participate in a cross-sectoral coalition. Members should include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People affected by inequities in community design</li> </ul>	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of public health, transportation, community planning, and parks and recreation</li> <li>Leaders who can help with specific issues, such as housing and healthy food access</li> <li>Early care and education, K–12 schools, and universities</li> <li>Public safety and public works<sup>300</sup></li> </ul>  			
 <p>Collaborate with local organizations and subject matter experts to develop targeted solutions aligned with community needs and promote active lifestyles.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Provide training and technical assistance related to community engagement and organizing, coalition building, needs assessment, action planning, and evaluation.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	<p>Communities adopt or enhance plans/policies to connect pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation networks (e.g., activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations)</p> <p>Communities implement visible changes to connect pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation networks Increased access to places for physical activity, both routes and destinations in communities, among priority populations</p> <p>Increased access to places for physical activity, both routes and destinations in communities</p>
 <p>Work with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) or Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and state transportation departments to integrate health considerations into project scoring criteria in support of active transportation project components. Such components may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring connections with destinations</li> </ul>	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering a focus on high-need areas (e.g., places with limited networks of activity-friendly infrastructure; places at risk for pedestrian or bicyclist injuries or fatalities; places with inequities)</li> <li>Tracking and improve walking, bicycling, and transit conditions</li> <li>Working in places with population densities that support these activities<sup>300</sup></li> </ul>  			
 <p>Work with partners to conduct health equity assessments. These could include an analysis of active transportation and public transit access, convenience, and reliability; strategies to prevent gentrification and displacement; park, trail, and greenway access and safety.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Work with a cross-sector team to complete the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Active Communities Tool to assess your community design and create an action plan to make it more activity-friendly. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit transportation systems that offer a direct and convenient connection with everyday destinations</li> <li>Offering physical protection from cars and making it easy to cross the street. These can include crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes, multiuse trails, and pedestrian public transit bridges<sup>300</sup></li> </ul>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Identify relevant state, regional, and local data. Use data on health conditions, health behaviors, and local capacity to increase physical activity through community design. Prioritize communities with health disparities. Examples include:</p>	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect health data such as physical activity levels, weight status, chronic diseases and risk behaviors, or pedestrian and bicycle injuries and deaths</li> <li>Note health equity assessment findings, the number of champions or level of political consensus, existence of a cross-sectoral coalition or current action plan, experience with evaluation experience addressing health inequities</li> <li>Use mapping software when appropriate to identify areas where resources may best be focused<sup>300</sup></li> </ul>  			
 <p>Conduct walk/move audits with local decision-makers and community members who represent diverse perspectives, such as age, ability, race/ethnicity, gender, and income.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Rate access to parks, trails, greenways, and recreational facilities and work with community coalitions to create or improve safe access to these locations.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Work with partners to update zoning codes to include activity-friendly design. Examples include form-based codes and activity-friendly districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit transportation systems that offer a direct and convenient connection with everyday destinations</li> <li>Offering physical protection from cars and making it easy to cross the street, including crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes, multiuse trails, and pedestrian public transit bridges<sup>300</sup></li> </ul> 	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans

Interventions	Population of Focus	Age Range	Intermediate Measures
 <p>Provide and/or promote training to opinion leaders, state and local staff, and coalition members about increasing physical activity through community design.<sup>300</sup></p>  	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Conduct and evaluate inclusive demonstration projects with the goal of influencing permanent infrastructure changes that lead to policy, systems, and environmental improvements, such as connecting active transportation networks and destinations.<sup>300</sup></p> 	Everyone	All ages	AARP Annual Survey, Public Health Local and State Data, State Community Assessment measures and plans
 <p>Implement pedestrian-centered policies such as Complete Streets and Vision Zero to require consideration of active transportation in all future developments.<sup>303,304</sup></p> 	Everyone	All ages	Number of active transportation-focused initiatives implemented, trends in walkability scores, trends in utilization of active transport, safety score of areas with high pedestrian traffic based on safety audit checklists
 <p>Enhance active transportation infrastructure through opportunities to expand existing networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage public and private sector businesses to adopt programs with alternative commuting methods; promote and participate in NYS's annual Green Your Commute Day</li> <li>• For state agencies, promote the use of 511NY Rideshare within state government agencies</li> <li>• For the private sector, promote greater use of carpooling<sup>305</sup></li> </ul>  	People vulnerable to climate change (older adults, children, low-income, etc.)	All ages	Increase in uptake of programs transportation programs

## Lead Partner Agencies and Organizations

[NYS Department of Transportation](#)

[NYS Department of Health](#)

[NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation](#)

[NYS Office for the Aging](#)

[NYS Department of Environmental Conservation](#)

U.S. Department of Transportation

Local departments of transportation

Local parks and recreation agencies

Local offices for the aging

Climate Smart Communities NY

Local departments of environmental conservation

Local transit authorities

Local transportation businesses

Local housing authorities

Regional Planning and Development Commission

Local planning agencies

Public works agencies

Land use organizations

Economic development agencies

Hospitals, primary care providers, regional health networks

Local businesses, chambers of commerce, tourism agencies

Local advocates, volunteer organizations, Rotary Clubs

Schools, BOCES programs

YMCA, youth services organizations

Bicycle and pedestrian consultants and organizations

Lawmakers, elected officials

Law enforcement, code enforcement

511NY Rideshare, other rideshare organizations

## Implementation Resources

[CDC - Physical Activity Community Design Resources](#)

[NYS Department of Transportation - Grants Dashboard](#)

[US Department of Transportation - Grants Dashboard](#)

[NYS Department of Transportation - Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Funding Opportunities](#)

[NYS Department of Environmental Conservation - Climate Smart Communities Funding](#)

[511NY Rideshare - NY Green Your Commute](#)

## Opportunities for Active Transportation and Physical Activity Citations

148. NYSDOH. Prevention Agenda Tracking Dashboard. Updated April 2024. Accessed February 13, 2025. [apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG\\_Public/pa/reports/#state](https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG_Public/pa/reports/#state)
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303. NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Complete Streets. Accessed February 20, 2025. [dot.ny.gov/programs/completestreets](https://dot.ny.gov/programs/completestreets)
304. U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT). Zero Deaths and Safe System. US DOT, Federal Highway Administration. Updated August 2, 2024. Accessed February 20, 2025. [highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths](https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths)
305. HHS. Combined Built Environment Features Help Communities Get Active. HHS, The Community Guide for Preventive Services. Accessed February 20, 2025 (via WayBack Machine November 29, 2024 archive). [web.archive.org/web/20241129142113/thecommunityguide.org/news/combined-built-environment-features-help-communities-get-active.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20241129142113/thecommunityguide.org/news/combined-built-environment-features-help-communities-get-active.html)