Growing urban populations will demand that their streets serve not only as corridors for the conveyance of people, goods, and services, but as front yards, parks, playgrounds, and public spaces.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The Benchmarking Report provides data and discussion of many topics that affect biking and walking. In Chapter II: Find Your Angle, you will find stakeholders from different sectors discussing why they promote bicycling and walking and the data that helps them in that effort.

Use the Find Your Angle chapter to learn about their efforts, gain inspiration for more topics to explore in Chapter III: Make Your Case, and then discover how to use the report data in Chapter IV: Show Your Data.

A People Powered Movement

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People support biking and walking for a variety of reasons. The Benchmarking Report is intended to provide data from diverse sources, so report users can decide how best to present that data within their communities.

The following six people represent potential users of the Benchmarking Report, and their stories are included here to inspire you as you engage with its myriad data.

“Find Your Angle” is based upon statements that were provided in response to a questionnaire that is reprinted in Chapter V: Appendix.

The views expressed by individuals in this chapter do not necessarily represent the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The perspective of an elected official is included to highlight the role of elected officials in promoting biking and walking. This is not an endorsement for public office.
Transportation & Health Researcher

Dr. Melissa Jean Bopp specializes in community-based influences on physical activity, health disparities, and public health approaches to physical activity. Her work has included studies of physical activity choices by college students, including how physical activity resources in neighborhoods and student housing affect physical activity and fitness behaviors. She recently co-authored *Bicycling for Transportation: An Evidence-Base for Communities*, published in 2018 by Elsevier.

**HER ANGLE ➤ BIKING & WALKING PROVIDE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THAT FIGHTS DISEASE**

According to Dr. Bopp, the benefits of biking and walking are wide-ranging and extensive. What interests her most are the health benefits associated with participation in active transportation. Regular active travel is associated with a decreased risk of chronic disease, as well as significant physical and mental health benefits. Given the rising costs of healthcare and the economic burden of poor health, prevention is key, and active transportation can play a valuable role.

Her work attempts to understand the factors that impact walking and biking behavior. Like any behavior, the choice to engage in walking and biking is a complex one, and it is important to look at things comprehensively. Dr. Bopp views walking and biking for transportation as an easy “sell” to fitting physical activity into busy lives. Time is the most common barrier to why people are not active, but according to Dr. Bopp, “we all have to travel places on a daily basis, so why not kill two birds with one stone--opt to walk or bike AND get your daily dose of activity?”

**HER ANGLE ➤ CURRENT DATA SHOWS GAPS AND NEEDS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The Benchmarking Report helps provide a rationale for her work by showing current data on walking and biking in the United States. These data highlight the gaps in knowledge that lead us to our next project, proposal, or joint venture with community partners.

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One continuing gap is a lack of data on active travel among ethnic minorities, populations with lower socio-economic status, and people living in rural areas. These groups tend to have higher rates of lifestyle-related chronic disease, so it would be helpful to understand their relationship with biking and walking. Such understanding is necessary because it is essential to draw on existing research of the influences for active travel in a given population in order to develop a tailored, more salient message for the group you are trying to target, according to Dr. Bopp. “Messages are always better received and more meaningful–therein more likely to change behavior--if a group feels like the message is built for them,” she says.

Urban Planner

Byron Rushing is the Walking and Bicycling Program Manager at the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), which is responsible for regional planning and intergovernmental coordination for the 10-county Atlanta region. He is also president of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. In 2016, ARC published “Walk. Bike. Thrive!” in support of the Atlanta Region’s 25-year regional plan with the goal of creating walking and bicycling options for everyone in every community in the region.²

His Angle >> Biking & Walking Provide a Scale for Better Regional Development

Walking and bicycling are healthy. They are good for the environment. They provide low-cost travel and make communities more equitable. But most importantly for Mr. Rushing, an urban and regional planner, bicycling and walking provide a yardstick for how we should build communities. “Communities scaled [for biking and walking]–a few miles for bike trips and a few blocks for walking trips–are dramatically different from how we currently plan, but [this approach] offer[s] a myriad of benefits--even for people who can’t or won’t use their bike regularly,” Says Mr. Rushing.

His Angle >> Data Tables Allow Accessible Comparisons

Working for a regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Mr. Rushing spends most of his time on data: prioritizing, benchmarking, and measuring impacts. Each of those functions requires a thorough database of comparable facts to provide insight into national peers and to track progress locally. The Benchmarking Report has been foundational to Mr. Rushing’s work, a document he uses often to put his city and region into perspective within a national context.

² Atlanta Regional Commission. Bike-Pedestrian Plan – Walk, Bike, Thrive! Available at https://atlantaregional.org/plans-reports/bike-pedestrian-plan-walk-bike-thrive/
Mr. Rushing identifies the biggest asset of the Benchmarking Report as the raw-number tables. Having easily accessible, comparable data—without too many agendas or filters—allows him to cut and slice information and answer the wide range of questions he receives from elected officials, planning staff, and the public. “There are times when we need to set numbers aside and make a moral or ethical decision about the need to invest in our communities,” he says, “but having facts to support an argument makes discussions a lot easier.”

Legislator

Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) represents California’s 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. The 6th Congressional District encapsulates Sacramento, California. Rep. Matsui is committed to the mutual alliance of federal, state, and local agencies to build transportation infrastructure. She used Sacramento’s regional blueprint plan as a model for the Safe Streets Act of 2015, which proposed a federal Complete Streets policy to ensure America’s roadways are designed with all users in mind, including bicyclists and pedestrians, children, seniors, and the disabled. The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 incorporated some aspects of the Safe Streets Act of 2015.  

According to Rep. Doris Matsui, “When we create policy with all transportation users in mind, we provide more people with the ability to choose sustainable transportation options.” By ensuring America’s streets are safe and by increasing the efficiency of our roads for all users, Congresswoman Matsui believes we can save lives while easing congestion, improving public health, and fighting climate change.

Making sure our laws can facilitate multiple modes of transportation encourages innovation. Low-stress bike and walking networks encourage residents and workers to use their bikes for local trips for both recreation and commuting. In the Sacramento region, for example, Congresswoman Matsui is proud of the electric bike share system introduced in 2018—the largest electric-assist bike share system in North America at its launch. Ensuring the country’s transportation landscape is ready to accommodate those types of exciting developments is important.

Rep. Matsui’s policy priorities rely on data, which means her messaging on those priorities does as well. Data help her decide where and why policy changes will be most

effective, helping her best explain the need for changes to constituents and colleagues. Effective data analyses can help guide the deployment of new pilot projects in communities, where it is important to test the effectiveness and community readiness for projects and programs that encourage bicycling, walking, and ride sharing as options to replace car trips.

“I’m encouraged by how many communities are embracing bicycling and walking as sustainable and beneficial modes of transportation,” says Rep. Matsui. “But I think we have a lot of work to do when it comes to modernizing our infrastructure around those trends. I’m hopeful that we can work together to get that done at a national level.”

With more people living in urban areas and an increasing array of public transportation options available, ensuring that communities are designed with bicycling and walking in mind can be key. Active transportation is an essential component in the development and implementation of sustainable community strategies, reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, and beneficial public health initiatives.

**Livability/Community Development Supporter**

Luis O. Cardona is Director of Economic Development at the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB). The Downtown Partnership oversees the Downtown Management Authority, Baltimore’s oldest and largest business improvement district, which covers 166 city blocks. The partnership supports biking and walking through events such as Bike 2 Work Day and related events in city parks. It also helps small businesses obtain bike parking, recruits businesses to participate in the League of American Bicyclists’ Bike Friendly Business Program, and subsidizes monthly bike share passes for low-income residents.4

**HIS ANGLE ➔ BIKING & WALKING ARE CRITICAL TO THE GROWING DOWNTOWN POPULATION OF BALTIMORE**

According to Luis Cardona, biking and walking are critical markers in the overall health and attractiveness of the downtown Baltimore district. When residents and visitors are comfortably navigating a city on foot and by bike, it increases the density of people on sidewalks, which encourages increased retail opportunities. Since the city’s downtown resident population is rapidly growing, the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore spends a great deal of time educating its car-oriented business stakeholders on why the partnership supports improved street conditions for bike and pedestrian users. This can be particularly challenging when talk turns to the recent installation of bicycling infrastructure downtown that has frustrated some drivers. However, “the Downtown Partnership recognizes that an increasing number of downtown residents and employees are electing to use bikes as a form of transit, and this represents the next step in the evolution of Baltimore’s central business district,” says Mr. Cardona.

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The DPOB has formally supported Complete Streets legislation to support the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users on city streets. It also has worked with its sponsor since the ordinance’s introduction to refine the language and gain buy-in from entities throughout Baltimore.

**HIS ANGLE ➔ PEER CITIES POINT TOWARDS BENEFITS OF IMPROVED BIKING & WALKING**

According to Mr. Cardona, “[f]or the past 75 years, downtown Baltimore has been engineered to move drivers in and out of the city at high speeds.” Many powerful local stakeholders use cars to access jobs and are generally unsupportive of changes to city streets that they perceive could disadvantage their rapid movement in and out of downtown. During the past decade, however, downtown Baltimore has become one of the city’s most populated neighborhoods with 42,000 residents as of 2017, and most of these residents do not own cars.

“Our messaging tends to be straightforward and consistent—the more people who feel safe walking and biking downtown, the healthier and more successful downtown Baltimore will be,” Says Mr. Cardona.

Currently, the Downtown Partnership is involved in efforts to widen sidewalks, augment park spaces, and make other improvements to the street-level experience in downtown Baltimore to encourage increased bike and pedestrian usage. It often points to other cities that have made similar improvements and experienced increased sidewalk density, which encourages more retail use. However, the partnership wants to use more data to make a stronger case.

**Livable Communities Supporter**

Danielle Arigoni is Director of Livable Communities at AARP, and a bike advocate both within AARP and in her community of Arlington, VA. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age. Find the nearest AARP state to where you live by visiting aarp.org/states, and sign up for a weekly newsletter on livable communities at aarp.org/livable-subscribe.

**HER ANGLE ➔ WALKABLE & BIKEABLE LOCATIONS BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER ACROSS GENERATIONS**

Ms. Arigoni is convinced that walking and biking infrastructure is the not-so-secret sauce of placemaking.

“As a planner, I’ve always known that good bike and pedestrian infrastructure delivers benefits for everyone, but it’s been truly eye-opening to see what a quality of life difference it can make for older adults in particular.” It’s now clear that the placemaking benefits are so much greater than the sum of a few crossing signals, some bicycles, and painted crosswalks and lanes. Walking and bicycling deliver real health benefits for individuals and the promise of a more sustainable and energy-neutral transportation future for the nation. But more than that, they provide mobility options and independence for people in a country where we typically outlive our ability to drive by between six and ten years.

“It’s really wonderful to see the evidence in the 2018 Benchmarking Report that our collective efforts are working for older adults. The percentage of people age 65 or older who regularly walk for exercise or to just get around is far greater today than it was for that age group in 2009. This is exactly the right trend – and a good affirmation that we’re on the right track.”

**DANIELLE ARIGONI**  
Director of Livable Communities, AARP, Washington, DC
Ms. Arigoni notes that AARP is working actively to promote the kind of pedestrian- and bike-friendly environments that enable people of all ages and incomes to get around. AARP is committed to ensuring that communities where older adults live (and that would be all communities) are supported in their efforts to strengthen community amenities through things like trail expansions, bicycle racks, bike-share programs, and protected walk-bike lanes. “When we can work with communities to implement these changes, we make bicycling and walking safer for everyone, and that makes communities stronger and more livable.”

**HER ANGLE » WORKING LOCALLY NATIONWIDE TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES**

AARP works locally nationwide to engage whole communities (not just our members) in “fun with purpose” activities that get people bicycling or walking as a means to combat isolation, promote healthy living and enhance social engagement. “We advance those goals through advocacy, demonstration projects, and through quick-action grants under our Community Challenge program, which funds real and tangible change on the ground. In the last two years, we helped communities promote bicycling among older adults by financing bicycle racks, expanding bike share access, installing bike-repair stations, advocating for safer street crossings and developing a mobile demonstration kit to promote transportation safety initiatives (including bike lanes) across an entire state.”

AARP also notes the rapid growth in communities that seek to become more “age-friendly” overall, as evidenced by growth in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities – now numbering more than 300 communities and three states. Through that Network, AARP staff and volunteers across the country directly support local leaders to increase transportation options as part of the network’s multi-year, locally-driven age-friendly planning process. “Many of our communities have concluded that pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure is essential to ensure that the mobility of older adults doesn’t end when their driving days do. In those communities, everyone wins. Cyclists benefit from protected bike lanes, pedestrians benefit from slower traffic speeds, and drivers benefit from alternatives that reduce congestion.”

The information gathered in the Benchmarking Report helps AARP achieve the goal of creating great places for all people of all ages. “We’re excited to partner with the League of American Bicyclists and so many other national and local organizations to deepen our work in communities. Let’s continue to work together to forge our way toward a livable, age-friendly and walk- and bike-friendly future for all.”

**INFORMATION & INSPIRATION FOR LOCAL LEADERS**

The AARP Livable Communities initiative creates and distributes free resources and information that put tools and inspiration into the hands of community leaders. The program’s website and newsletter are award-winning. Its publications include the AARP *Walk Audit Tool Kit*, the *Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages* guide and the *Where We Live* series. Learn more at AARP.org/Livable.
**Multimodal Transportation Supporter or Partner**

Melody Geraci is the Deputy Executive Director at the Active Transportation Alliance (Active Trans). Active Trans is a nonprofit advocacy organization that works to improve conditions for bicycling, walking, and transit and to engage people in healthy, active ways to get around. Active Trans is a member organization of the League of American Bicyclists and was a founding member of the Alliance for Biking and Walking. At the time of the Alliance’s founding, Active Trans was named the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation and the Alliance for Biking and Walking was named the Thunderhead Alliance.

**HER ANGLE » BIKING & WALKING ARE CRUCIAL COMPONENTS OF A FREE & FAIR SOCIETY**

When Ms. Geraci started with Active Trans in 2005, her main motivation for working in transportation advocacy was concern about the environment. But now she says, “What has kept me in this field for 13 years—what gets me up in the morning, so to speak—is the fundamental injustice of a car-centric society.” Ms. Geraci has found that a lack of transportation choices is a major barrier to accessing jobs, education, healthcare, healthy foods, basic services, green space, and more, especially for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. By orienting everything in communities around cars, policymakers are picking winners and losers as a society, and intentionally disenfranchising the poor, people with disabilities, older adults, people of color, and others. According to Ms. Geraci, “[w]hen communities are abundant with walking, biking and transit options, they are more safe, fair, and humane—and that’s worth fighting for.”

“My basic elevator pitch is that all people should be able to have a high quality of life without needing a car,” she says. “[They should have] the ability to move freely around our communities [as] a civil right and a key component of a free society, and ... communities that are rich with ample walking, biking and public transit options are happier, healthier, kinder, cleaner, safer, and more equitable.”

**HER ANGLE » DATA IS CRITICAL FOR LARGE-SCALE CHANGE, BUT DATA ON ALL TYPES OF BIKING & WALKING ARE HARD TO FIND**

Active Trans focuses on ‘upstream approaches’ to change. In serving such a large metropolitan region that has thousands of units of government and jurisdictional authorities, they’ve learned that broad-reaching policy and systemic approaches offer them the best opportunity for creating a larger overall impact. Data is critical for making a robust case in support of walking, biking, and public transit. Facts can make or break an argument, particularly when providing educational awareness for policy advancements.

Ms. Geraci says that the data missing on biking and walking is comprehensive usage data, including non-commuter trips. Without having routine collection and dissemination of walking and biking levels, and standard methods for measuring the same, policymakers only get a partial picture of the transportation environment. And without a comprehensive understanding our change strategies are underinformed. At the same time, she says simple statistics, including those based on national data, can help “sell” biking and walking to the public and elected officials.