

1. Introduction

Importance of Walking

Walking is central to our lives; is a component of virtually all trips; and has positive health environmental and community benefits. Increased walking improves public health and reduces car dependence. In turn, reduced car dependence will ease traffic congestion, improve air quality, and decrease emissions that lead to global warming. Furthermore, strong pedestrian infrastructure can encourage centers of commerce, employment, education, and play that increase community vitality and accessibility for people with disabilities.

Who are Pedestrians?

Pedestrians include people who walk, sit, stand, or use a wheelchair in public spaces. Children, teenagers, adults, the elderly, people with disabilities, workers, residents, shoppers, students and tourists are all pedestrians.

Every trip involves walking, alone or in combination with public transit, motor vehicles or bicycles. Pedestrians include people of all ages from children to older adults as well as people with visual, mobility, and sensory impairments, such as those who use wheelchairs. Efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities should be a priority in the development of any pedestrian improvement plan.

The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) describes walking and the importance of the pedestrian:

Walking is a basic human activity, and almost everyone is a pedestrian at one time or another...Even though pedestrians are legitimate roadway users, they are frequently overlooked in the quest to build more sophisticated transportation systems. Whether building new infrastructure or renovating existing facilities, it should be assumed that people will walk, and plans should be made to accommodate pedestrians. Where people aren't walking, it is often because they are prevented or discouraged from doing so.²

The deficiency of appropriate facilities for pedestrians contributes to physical inactivity. Communities need to provide environments that promote walking and engage residents in physical fitness. In turn, increased pedestrian activity promotes health benefits such as weight control, lower blood pressure, stress reduction, and sleep improvement.



What Does this Plan Do?

It is sometimes stated that there is no point in providing or improving pedestrian facilities because there are no pedestrians in that area. This neglects the fact that the lack of pedestrians may be directly related to the quality or absence of pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks or crosswalks.

PedPlan2010 seeks to steer every community toward implementing a pedestrian plan on a local level, whether by improving or establishing a plan to maintain or enhance its existing pedestrian facilities or by

² The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 500, Volume 10, A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Pedestrians, 2004, page I-1.

developing a strategy to create a pedestrian plan where few if any facilities exist. Most importantly, whether a community is urban, suburban, or quasi-rural, PedPlan2010 seeks to increase awareness of transportation by foot as a fundamental element of the region's overall transportation network and a critical means of promoting public health. Finally, PedPlan2010 provides individual communities with a variety of measures that can be implemented on a cost-effective basis, taking advantage of federal, state, and local funding opportunities or scheduling pedestrian improvements to coincide with other planned infrastructure developments to maximize the level of improvements to be gained with less capital investment.

Major Types of Pedestrian Trips

Terminal Trips

Trips made to and from home or points associated with transportation mode areas such as parking lots, bus stops, and transportation stations.

Utilitarian Trips

Trips made to carry out a specific function, such as business trips related to work or personal business trips that involve shopping, dining or going to a doctor's office.

Recreational Trips

Trips made for purposes related to leisure time or for purposes such as going to the theatre, concerts, and sporting events. Recreational trips also include social activities in which walking is one of the primary purposes.

Source: Pedestrian Malls, Streetscapes, and Urban Spaces, Harvey Rubenstein, 1992.

