

Executive Summary

The benefits of walking, such as improving public health, fostering connected communities, decreasing automobile dependence, and reducing air pollution are highlighted in the Boston Region's Pedestrian Transportation Plan (PedPlan2010). There is an increasing need and responsibility to give people the opportunity to walk. PedPlan2010 addresses the importance of walking and what can be done to facilitate and promote it as a viable mode of transportation.

Unfortunately, years of auto-centric public policy decisions have established a transportation system that has not created infrastructure equivalent for pedestrians. As a result, impediments to pedestrian travel have been created that can make walking difficult and dangerous in both urban and suburban communities. Transportation issues such as traffic congestion and speeding vehicles, inefficient snow and ice removal, walkway¹ maintenance, and infrastructure design that accommodate pedestrians are some examples of these impediments. Implementing the recommendations outlined in PedPlan2010 will help to remove these impediments and accomplish the goal of increased walking throughout the Boston region.

PedPlan2010 identifies actions local governments, advocacy organizations, the private sector and individuals should take to encourage walking. At its core, PedPlan2010 is a planning document that describes the existing pedestrian infrastructure in the Boston region's 101 cities and towns, and recommends policies and practices that will facilitate walking as a convenient, safe, and practical form of transportation.

Key Challenges:

- Walking can be difficult and potentially hazardous. Only about half of the region's road and street network has walkways.
- Few commuters walk to work. Only 5.7 percent of commuters walked to work in the Boston Region in 2000. The percent of walking commuters was slightly higher in the Boston Region compared to Massachusetts (4 percent). Within the Boston Region, the percent of those who walked to work ranged from as high as 24 percent in Cambridge to as low as 0 percent in Middleton. There is room to make walking an option for more commuters.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, the Massachusetts' adult population obesity rate among Massachusetts adults increased from 10-14 percent of the population in 1998 to 20-24 percent in 2008. Almost 25 percent of Massachusetts high school students are overweight or are at-risk of becoming overweight. Obesity can decline if people walk more.

Key Recommendations:

- Municipalities should work with appropriate stakeholders and use PedPlan2010 to develop and implement a comprehensive pedestrian plan for their city or town. The comprehensive pedestrian plan will recommend ways to complete the pedestrian network, integrate well-designed pedestrian infrastructure into the built landscape, and develop measures to adequately fund maintenance and operation programs.
- Educate the public about the benefits and means of incorporating walking into their daily lives. The pedestrian plan provides information on educational programs that encourage walking. Participation in these programs will increase the health, safety and physical activity of the public.

¹ Walkways comprise all facilities that carry pedestrians. This includes sidewalks, paths, shared streets and shared-use paths.