



How the Indiana Department of Health Promotes Walking and Biking Through Interdisciplinary Partnerships

Indiana has a mix of urban and rural areas, with significant populations in cities like Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, but also many smaller towns and farming communities. The state's geography includes flatlands, rolling hills, and rivers, presenting varied transportation needs and challenges such as improving connectivity in rural areas, enhancing public transit in urban centers, and developing infrastructure to support biking and walking.

The Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) observed an opportunity for collaboration among state agencies to promote walking and biking to everyday places such as grocery stores and worksites. Recognizing the potential to leverage various agencies' strengths, IDOH invited a team with representatives from other agencies to attend the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors' Active People, Healthy NationSM [Walkability Action Institute](#) (WAI). The WAI brings together cross-disciplinary teams representing public health, planning, transportation, elected officials, and other disciplines to participate in an intensive, applied-learning course on improving walkability with a focus on community and transportation design.



FORMATION OF INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

The WAI inspired the creation of an interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU). This agreement facilitated collaboration among IDOH, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and non-profit partners like [Health by Design](#). Through the MOU, Indiana's state agencies co-sponsored state convenings such as the Indiana Bike Walk Summit, created guidance documents to help communities incorporate walking and biking in their comprehensive plans, and produced a legislatively mandated [Indiana Bike Trails Task Force Report](#). The MOU also allowed INDOT to transfer Federal Highway Administration funds to IDOH to work on bike and pedestrian safety and active living promotion work.

COMPLETE STREETS IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTIVE LIVING WORKSHOPS

One significant initiative that emerged from the interdisciplinary partnership was the implementation of a series of workshops to support municipalities with walking and biking initiatives. Their workshops provided training on developing and implementing policies for safe and accessible streets. With support from their partners, IDOH implemented 80 workshops focused on Complete Streets, Bicycle Friendly Communities, and active living, reaching approximately 2,500 planners, engineers, community champions, elected officials, and regional departments of transportation. As a result, Complete Streets policies now cover 62% of Indiana, reaching

more than 4 million people. IDOH also published the [Indiana Active Living Guidebook](#), a resource that helps communities pursue walking and biking initiatives independently.

The success of the Complete Streets workshops led to the development and implementation of Active Living workshops. These workshops were designed for communities that were new to planning for walking and biking. A key feature of these workshops was the [walk audit](#). The walk audits helped participants understand existing infrastructure challenges to walking and biking and envision potential improvements.

FUNDING AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

Funding for these initiatives came from various sources. Initially, IDOH used funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) State Physical Activity and Nutrition grant program. When CDC funding ended, they leveraged Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds to pay for staff time and program activities supporting walking and biking and safety for women, children, and families. The Purdue University Cooperative Extension also funded an additional 25 active living workshops in rural communities.

“It's amazing how effective walk audits are, especially for people who are new to this work. It really helps them to see what the existing problems are and how you can solve them.”

-**Pete Fritz**, Indiana
Department of Health

CONCLUSION

IDOH's proactive approach and strategic collaborations make it a model for promoting walking and biking to get to everyday places. Through workshops, effective use of funding, and cooperation within and between agencies, IDOH increased statewide efforts to address community and transportation design, creating healthier communities across the state.

Contact Information

Pete Fritz, FAICP, PLA
Healthy Communities Planner
PeFritz@health.in.gov
Indiana State Department of Health