

Plan4Health: Active Transportation Community of Interest

by: Liz Kaster

SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The Puyallup Watershed Initiative's Active Transportation Community of Interest (AT COI) aims to increase access to safe, healthy, and affordable active transportation options and to educate the community on health, equity, and active transportation.

CHALLENGE

The Pierce County portion of the Puyallup Watershed has a population of more than 400,000 and is characterized as being more diverse, but with lower rates of education and lower median income when compared to the rest of the state. More than nine percent of families live below the poverty line and 14 percent do not carry health insurance. Pierce County ranked 21st out of 39 counties in Washington for overall health outcomes. Heart disease and cancer

are two of the top causes of death, with rates higher than state averages. Obesity and smoking rates are also elevated and African Americans experience worse health outcomes when compared to other races. Pedestrian and bicycle safety are major concerns as well. Washington scored a 28.46 on the Pedestrian Danger Index, which ranked 36th nationally. Between 2013 and 2014, 16 deaths, 80 serious injuries, and hundreds of less severe accidents occurred in Pierce County.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Residents of Pierce County can stay up-to-date on coalition news and events by visiting the coalition's website (www.pwi.org/collaboratives/active-transportation), Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/PuyallupWatershed) and following @PuyallupWater on Twitter.

To learn more about the Active Transportation Community of Interest and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us). Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by

"We are well on our way to creating a historic effort on safety for our kids and our schools." City of Tacoma Councilmember Robert Thoms, when speaking about recent Safe Routes to School planning developments.

"We are committed to reducing accidents to zero." Kurtis Kingsolver (City of Tacoma Director of Public Works) in Tacoma City Council Study Session about the proposed

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SOLUTION

The Active Transportation Community of Interest (AT COI) will empower the community to get involved with planning and policy making through community education and training—and will educate local policymakers, community leaders, and the public on the intersections between health, equity, and active transportation. Priority jurisdictions will be identified and the coalition will help each community develop and implement a policy, systems, and environmental change action plan focused on improving access to safe, healthy, and affordable active transportation options.

RESULTS

Last October, three young people were hit by cars in while walking to or from school in Tacoma during the span of one week. Shortly after these incidents, the AT COI released a report highlighting an alarming trend: every eight days a child in Tacoma is hit by a car while walking or bicycling. These collisions happen in more frequently in Tacoma's lower income neighborhoods and racially diverse communities. While the safety of young people and speeding have been long-standing concerns for Tacoma residents, this report brought to light how extensive this issue really is at a time when the community was beginning to have a conversation with local decision makers about how to support young people to stay safe while walking, bicycling, and skateboarding.

This past spring, the City of Tacoma was selected to be one of three priority jurisdictions the AT COI worked with to implement policy, system, and environmental change to impact community health outcomes. The AT COI worked closely with city staff to first identify existing supportive active transportation policies and then developed recommendations for how to strengthen these plans and

SUSTAINING SUCCESS