

Understanding the Intersection of Health and Transportation



As transportation agencies consider embedding health considerations into their plans, policies, and projects, it is critical to consider the metrics that matter. To create useful models and improve the health outcomes of communities, agencies should look at health data across multiple categories:



Active Travel Opportunities

Transportation agencies should consider how infrastructure plans can provide opportunities for active travel. Vehicle-centric planning and a lack of transit can limit physical activity in the immediate and surrounding communities.



Safety for All Users

Infrastructure should always be designed with safety in mind. Collecting safety metrics on all users, including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, can help planners avoid creating unsafe conditions.



Air Pollution Impacts

Air pollution can be an important issue for transportation planners, especially in urban areas. Health models can help planners mitigate air pollution impacts.



Health Equity Impacts

Disadvantaged communities often lack access to transportation. Inadequate infrastructure has serious health consequences. Assessing these impacts in the planning stages can promote health equity for residents.



Mental Health Impacts

A lack of access to transit or active transportation can contribute to feelings of isolation and depression. Modeling these impacts can help planners design infrastructure that brings communities together.

Each of these five categories of health impacts can have far-reaching effects on the immediate and surrounding communities. When transportation agencies take these transportation-health connections into account, they can model the potential risks and benefits of any given project and adjust their plans accordingly. These insights allow planners to begin designing and building better infrastructure that not only facilitates efficient travel but also healthier communities.

