

Multnomah County- Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Year-two Success Story

Multnomah County-REACH Partner Leads Work in Improving Transportation Access

At A Glance

Unlike the city of Portland, East County has very limited safe bike routes. In order to address this issue, the City of Gresham leveraged grant funding to install new pavement markings and bike route signage. Their goal was to connect people to everyday destinations such as stores, schools, and parks. This allowed residents to be active while traveling throughout their community.



Public Health Challenge

The City of Gresham's Active Transportation Plan (ATP, 2018) measured rates of obesity, healthy food destinations in the area and the means of transportation typically used to get to grocery stores in East Multnomah County. Their goal was to find ways to connect people to healthy food sources using active transportation. According to the ATP, "in the 2013 Rockwood Community Food Assessment, 40% of people reported that transportation makes it difficult to get groceries and 33% use public transportation, bike or walk to the grocery store." Based on these findings, much of Rockwood is described as a food desert. This finding supports the City of Gresham's framing of the importance of improving Rockwood bike routes for traveling to everyday destinations.



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Approach

Framing for the Active Transportation Plan started in 2017, with initial work being geared towards public outreach. The goal of their outreach was to identify places where community members wanted to see bike lane improvements. Ten community liaisons were hired in order to assist with these community inquiries. They then hosted focus groups and community events to get public input on needed improvements for people to increase their use of active transportation. By hosting these events, the City of Gresham's Urban Design & Planning Department was able to capture public health data on transportation access and physical activity measures. The City of Gresham then adopted a plan to fully develop, design and create safer bike routes to directly address the gaps that existed in active transportation accessibility.

Based on previous findings, the City of Gresham identified the Rockwood area as a location of focus for any future improvements. The City of Gresham received \$69,473 in grant funding from Metro, an elected regional planning and coordination agency, to implement the Rockwood Bike Route. This program called for the installation of pavement markings and signs to alert drivers of incoming bikers. It is their hope that due to these improvements, drivers will be more alert in these areas, thereby making it more conducive for people to bike or walk throughout Rockwood neighborhoods safely. These improvements to the built environment will create a means for community members to safely get to everyday destinations such as stores, schools, and parks, while using active transportation.

The City of Gresham is looking to finalize the bike route infrastructure by Spring 2021, with the route signage installed by Fall 2020.

Results

The ATP provided critical documentation for the City of Gresham to demonstrate the importance of the bike routes and sidewalks, thereby providing safe opportunities for the community members to walk and bike to everyday destinations. Through implementing this project, the City of Gresham also addressed the inequitable access to resources and the communities' everyday destinations.



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Sustaining Success

City of Gresham's Urban Design & Planning Department is currently seeking external funding in order to install additional bike signage and pavement markings throughout the city of Gresham and East County. The City of Gresham will be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of these installed bike routes. Through partnerships with Multnomah County and community-based organizations, City of Gresham's Urban Design & Planning Department hopes to further promote the usage of these existing and future bike routes.

Quote

"The implementation of the Active Transportation Plan is how we envision we can impact the system. By improving transportation access for folks in Gresham, they can have an easier time getting access to the resources they need within everyday destinations," said Jay Higgins, Associate Transportation Planner for City of Gresham.



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