

Transportation and health

NARRATIVES AND HEALTH EQUITY: EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

Having many options for transportation in a community—including transit—allows individuals and families to connect with schools, jobs, neighbors, friends, and families, and provides access to a wide range of essential needs, including food, recreation, and health care. The emerging narrative came about as part of statewide efforts to promote affordable transportation and multi-modal transportation options in Minnesota.

1. Health is closely connected to all the daily activities of life, and transportation is a key component of those activities.
 - a. Work that pays a livable wage is essential for health. Creating health in the community means providing opportunities to find and keep a good job by having reliable forms of transportation.
 - b. Creating health in the community means providing access to the necessities of life, including food, health care, and connections to our family, friends, and faith community. Reliable and affordable transportation keeps us connected to the things and people that keep us healthy.
 - c. Creating health in the community means providing safe environments. Transportation systems form a large part of the everyday health and safety of all people in Minnesota.
2. All people need, but many do not have, safe and affordable transportation options.
 - a. Populations with concentrations of lower incomes, including populations of color and American Indians, are more likely to depend on public transit and often live in areas of historical underinvestment and disinvestment (i.e., structural racism). These burdens increase exposure to pollution and noise from the transportation system, increase transportation costs and stress, and create unequal access to economic and educational opportunities, housing, healthy foods, and opportunities for physical activity.
 - b. Rural populations, especially communities located outside a five-mile radius of a city or town, have very limited transportation options.
3. Transportation has many impacts on safety, including the condition of sidewalks, bike paths/bike lanes, roads and bridges, concentrated emissions from vehicles, the safety of pedestrian crossings, adequate lighting and signage, adequate bus shelters, and traffic speeds and controls. Every population in Minnesota should have the opportunity to influence the distribution of the benefits and burdens of transportation decisions.
4. Equitable transportation systems support the health of communities by assuring that *everyone* can get to where they need to go, reducing inequities, improving education and job security, strengthening social connections, supporting mental health, providing access to recreation, and contributing to economic development.
5. The processes for developing transportation systems are important for health equity. The meaningful involvement of communities in transportation decisions can shape a transportation infrastructure that

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maximizes the health of Minnesota’s communities. Issues to consider in addition to getting from one place to another include creating equitable opportunities for recreation, assuring safe routes to school, and the need to promote social connectedness in the community.

6. A number of Minnesota communities (e.g., North Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul) have experienced the negative consequences of transportation decisions. Involving the community in the development of transportation systems is essential to repair the harms and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Widespread community participation in decision-making processes is empowering, builds capacity for leadership, and is essential for creating health. In addition to drivers, people to involve in these decisions include seniors, non-drivers, persons with disabilities, communities of color, and families with children.
7. Previous transportation decisions need to be examined to assure that inequities are not perpetuated over time, so that all people in Minnesota have equitable access to safe and reliable transportation.

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Minnesota Department of Health
Healthy Minnesota Partnership
www.health.state.mn.us/healthymnpartnership
651-201-3880 health.ophp@state.mn.us

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