



Transportation's Role in Public Health

Transportation plays an important role in health, well-being, and quality of life. The transportation system provides access to goods and services critical to health such as affordable/healthy foods, health care, education, and career opportunities. Active transportation options are known to increase physical activity, reduce obesity, and lower rates of disease. Transportation is a top contributor to urban air pollution, with major impacts to respiratory and lung health. The transportation system has a significant impact on the health of our communities.

Accessibility

Enhancing access to affordable/healthy foods, health care, education, and career opportunities can have a significant and positive impact on the health of communities. As one example, the "Smart Columbus" project in Columbus, OH, USA intends to leverage Smart Mobility solutions to reduce the City's infant mortality by 40 percent and cut the health disparity gap in half. Columbus is looking to achieve these goals through the development of a multimodal trip planning application, a smart payment system, and a smart multimodal corridor. These and other solutions can enhance access to goods and services that improve health. Link: <https://www.columbus.gov/smartcolumbus/home/>

Active Transportation

Building communities with strong active transportation options increases physical activity and improves health. Smart Communities can play a role in increasing active transportation choices. Smart street lights can ensure efficient lighting along a travel route, but also provide monitoring and surveillance to enhance security as well. Smart wayfinding can make the system easier to navigate and improve system connectivity. As one example, smart applications are being developed that facilitate connections between transit and availability of bike share, thus encouraging active travel options.

Air Quality

Smart Community solutions can help to reduce urban air pollution and improve respiratory and lung health. Many strategies are being used toward this goal, including vehicle electrification, advanced traffic management systems (to reduce vehicle idling), and modal shifts away from single occupant vehicles.

Smart Partnerships

Strong partnerships with those in the health community are needed to better understand how Smart Communities can be leveraged to improve public health. ITE's Transportation and Health Task Force is working to strengthen relationships with groups such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Public Health Association (APHA). Local partnerships between transportation agencies and public health departments are encouraged in the development of local Smart Community plans.

How ITE Can Help

The first step for ITE members is to join the Smart Communities page of ITE Community: <http://bit.ly/2zooOMm>. Additionally, members with experience or insight into transportation and health issues can play a role in furthering the conversation on this topic and volunteering to help develop resources for your peers.

If you have questions or would like more information on the ITE Smart Communities initiative, please contact the ITE Smart Communities Task Force(SCoTF) at smartcommunities@ite.org.