

# Plan4Health: Safer Routes to School in Columbus, OH

"The advancement of Safe Routes to School Programming and accompanying infrastructure improvements will have a lasting, positive impact for Columbus City School's students, families, staff, and for the surrounding community in which they live, learn, play and work."

*Jackie Broderick Patton  
Wellness Initiative Coordinator  
Columbus City Schools*

*The City of Columbus hosted the National Safe Routes to School Conference in April 2016, with coalition members playing key roles in developing session content and planning conference activities.*

## Success Stories



## SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by the American Planning Association (APA) and the American Public Health Association (APHA), Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The goal of the Columbus Public Health's Chronic Disease Prevention Advisory Board is increasing opportunities for physical activity in Columbus, Ohio. Efforts include implementing school travel plans, promoting active transportation strategies, and conducting a health impact assessment.

## CHALLENGE

Columbus, Ohio, in Franklin County, has more than 820,000 residents, making it the 15th most populous city in the United States. According to the 2013 Franklin County community health needs assessment, 76 percent of the adult population consumes less than five servings of fruits and vegetables daily and only 21 percent meet physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity and muscle strengthening. As a result, overweight residents and obesity, in particular,

have emerged as critical local concerns. Only 16 percent of K-8 students walked to and from school, while 80 percent were either bussed or driven in a family vehicle. Among workers aged 16 and over, only 3 percent walked to work and 3 percent took public transit, while 80.7 percent drove alone. The Chronic Disease Prevention Advisory Board is committed to leveraging existing programs and launching new strategies to increase opportunities for physical activity for all residents in Columbus.

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

## SOLUTION

The Plan4Health initiative brings together more than 30 organizations, including universities, hospitals, food banks, and bike shares to address the low number of students walking or biking to school. The coalition implemented the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Travel Plan recommendations through walking school bus programs, biking rodeos, bike racks, and physical education curriculums.

The coalition prioritizes sustainability and long-term success by building relationships with key stakeholders. From parents and principals to the school board and public works, the coalition has worked to develop a holistic approach to environmental and systems change. The coalition hasn't forgotten the power of peers: 100 high school students participated in walk audit training over the summer. The coalition is leveraging the interest of older students to provide mentoring and support for younger students.

## SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

The work in Columbus, OH is an example for other communities of how to change environments to make healthy living easier where people live, learn, work, and play.

If you live in Columbus, check out a coalition meeting, or try biking to the grocery store or walking to the park. For more information about Columbus, OH and all of the coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out [www.plan4health.us](http://www.plan4health.us) and join the conversation on social media with #plan4health.

### Contact

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## RESULTS

The walking school bus pilot project, which started at Clinton Elementary School, brought together 15 students for seven weeks and included three different routes. The pilot program is expanding, with elementary schools across the district expressing interest both the walking school bus and bike rodeos.

Complementing the youth engagement strategy, the coalition has also successfully connected with local businesses to encourage biking. Coalition members have worked to institute policies and amenities to support biking to work and to help businesses understand how being bike friendly strengthens their business models. Access to safe routes for residents of all ages is an essential component of a healthy, vibrant community.

Plan4Health is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The views expressed in this success story do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the CDC or imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Learn more about Plan4Health and the National Implementation and Dissemination of Chronic Disease Prevention project at [www.cdc.gov/communityhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/communityhealth).

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