

Winnebago County Board of Health

Support for the City of Rockford's 10-Year Bike Plan

The Winnebago County Department of Public Health and Board of Health support the proposed City of Rockford 10-year Bike Plan. It is clear that the 10-year bike plan has many objectives important to improving the social environment of our community, including better transportation facilities, embracing the philosophy of complete streets, the use of a practical, non-polluting and affordable mode of transportation.

In recent years there has been growing awareness of the importance of the social environment and policy change in promoting heart-healthy and stroke-free communities. Such changes typically result in activities and interventions focused on community level change. Up until recently, health promotion efforts for heart disease and stroke have traditionally employed a health education approach focused on the major biomedical and behavioral risk factors. These risk factors of course include hypertension, elevated blood cholesterol, obesity, diabetes, poor diet, physical inactivity and cigarette smoking. However the social environment paradigm of health promotion suggest that interventions should focus “upstream” and attempt to directly modify environmental conditions to positively influence human behavior and provide easier healthy choices for residents.

In July 2009 CDC published *Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the U.S.* Among these recommendations there are several that address strategies to create safe communities that support physical activity:

- Improved access to outdoor recreational facilities
- Enhanced infrastructure supporting bicycling (total miles)
- Enhanced infrastructure supporting walking,
- Locating schools within easy walking distance of residential areas
- Improved access to public transportation

Intervention studies have demonstrated that improving bicycling and walking infrastructure is associated with increased frequency of bicycling and walking.

The 10-year bike plan is in special keeping with WCHD's mission to “*prevent disease, promote health and enlist the community in efforts to improve the health of all Winnebago County residents.*” WCHD urges this plan to be adopted as an amendment to the 2020 plan.