

# **Exploration of the built environment of Dona Ana County to promote healthy lifestyles**

**Presentation to the Tobacco Settlement  
Revenue Oversight Committee**

**NMSU - 5 August 2016**



# Context of project

- Relationship of sedentary lifestyles to morbidity and mortality is well documented
  - “Sitting is the new smoking”
- Strong evidence notes that active lifestyles lead to better health outcomes.
- The question – how to support people to get active for healthier lifestyles?
- The role of our built environment is key in answering this question.



# Focus of project

- Non private passenger automobile (non-PPA) transportation provides much opportunity for healthier lifestyles.
  - This includes transit, bicycling, & walking.
  - Even regular transit use increases exercise.
- Focus of project is to create **Mobility Capability Network for DAC**, similar to project the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization and Juarez are doing.



# Recent news story supports idea in El Paso/Ciudad Juárez region

## Plan could link NM, Juárez, El Paso county

### System focuses on carless connection

LINDSEY ANDERSON  
EL PASO TIMES

EL PASO - Connecting trails, bike paths, parks and historic sites from Las Cruces to Tornillo to Juárez is the focus of a new initiative from the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The Active Transportation System aims to link existing paths around El Paso County and the region, promoting carless transportation such as biking and walking, as well as tourism and health.

"We're looking at transportation in a

brief meeting Friday morning.

The Active Transportation System will include the El Paso Bike Share Program and seven regional segments: Avenida de Estrellas, International Beltway, El Paso Mission Trail, Paseo del Este, Warrior's Way, Transmountain Trail and Solstice Track.

The initiative will begin with inventorying existing paths and sites and identifying gaps throughout the county, while building on work already being done by city and county agencies, officials said Friday.

Some of those gaps are as small as the few blocks between one path at Prospect Street and another at Hawthorne Street, both near the University of Texas at El Paso, said Greg McNicol, chairman of the

state's border with Colorado to its southern edge with Mexico.

The El Paso project could incorporate parks, schools and historical sites such as the Ysleta and Socorro missions, officials said.

It could also include an international bike share program, bringing El Paso's new bike share to Juárez.

El Paso's SunCycle Bike Share program launched in September 2015, growing to 15 bike stations in Downtown and near the University of Texas at El Paso. Riders can rent a bike at one station and return it at another.

Under the international bike share, riders could rent bicycles at an El Paso station and return them in Juárez, and vice versa.



MARK LAMBIE/EL PASO TIMES  
Alexandra Riccillo presents a plan to the MPO Transportation Policy Board on Friday.

# What is Mobility Capability Network?

- MCN = computer generated Web mapping tool that maps origins, destinations, & routes.
- Key elements are community input on O/D, key linkages, and missing elements/gaps
- Web-based tool also educates public about how to safely navigate routes.
- Trail-based recreational options would also be mapped and documented.



# Project activities

- Initial work = engaging public, planners, & advocates to ID/map transportation needs.
- Through use of geographic information systems (GIS or smart maps), we map origins, destinations, & gaps.
- Trail-based recreation stakeholders will also be included (SNMTA, OMDPNM, & more).
- GIS analysis will produce concrete actionable ideas on how to eliminate or lessen gaps.



# Project activities

- Once gaps are IDed, policy brief will document HOW to make needed changes.
  - Model ordinances to promote non-PPA options
  - ABQ example – fixed % of transportation budget devoted to non-PPA transportation.
- 2nd round of community engagement shares project outcomes and “closes the loop” to promote active lifestyles.





# Project partners

- Strong connections to planning experts connects project to facilities planning.
- LCPS Safe Routes to School (SRTS) will aid in reaching families and kids.
- Doña Ana Communities United will help with community engagement.
- NMSU faculty (Medina and Morales) will provide input to policy & health outreach.





# Project outcomes

- Community engagement tells us what public wants, especially the “where part.”
- Web-based mapping tool provides useable tool by which people can map their trips.
- Project outcomes are consistent with other efforts to promote healthy lifestyles - NMDOH Prescription Trails Program.
- Policy briefs document concrete actionable ideas to be worked into current/ongoing policy.



# What is innovative about project?

- Focus of project challenges current PPA dominated paradigm of transportation.
- Coupling of mobile devices, Web-portal, and community input = innovative approach.
- Web-based tool = highly accessible means to share route information– think Über!
- Accessing map tools via mobile devices puts needed info “at one’s fingertips”.



# Significance to health outcomes

- Outcomes directly promote healthy lifestyles, reduce morbidity/mortality, and reduce health care costs.
- Link to SRTS helps us pass on lessons to kids and future generation – like recycling.
- Policy outcomes influence future plans for healthier built environment – dynamism of Boulder, CO and Bozeman, MT = examples.



# Closing comments

- Project proposed fits goal of Tobacco Settlement Funds to promote health and reduce disease.
- Toolbox we propose is highly accessible to mobile population, across ages.
- Long term outcomes allow our cities in NM to move from “least fit places to most fit.”
- Ultimate outcome – help create positive public health outcomes, intent of program

