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Press Release
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On May 22, National Speaker and Healthy Helena Advocates Convened to Discuss Why a More Walkable, Bikable and Transit-Friendly Community Matters

Helena - Over breakfast, community health stakeholders gathered for an informational, interactive roundtable with Mark Fenton, nationally recognized pedestrian advocate and healthy community planner to discuss options for a Healthy Helena. Fenton discussed the benefits of a walkable, bikable, transit-friendly community and shared Helena area photos taken the previous evening during a healthy transportation “walk about.”

"Communities across the country are at an important crossroads," said Fenton. "We have a unique opportunity to rethink how and where we live, work, shop, learn, and play. Plus there's an opportunity for a tremendous public health benefit, if we can make active travel choices like walking, bicycling, or taking transit an easier, safer, and less expensive choice for more people. The cities that will thrive in the 21st century will be the cities that have healthy, active populations, resilient, flexible transportation systems, and thriving local business districts that are accessible and inviting to *all* residents."

Melanie Reynolds with the Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department, Dr. David Krainacker, Cathy Costakis with the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, and Elizabeth Andrews, Montana representative with the Transportation for America Campaign, also spoke at the event and shared their work on transportation issues and why now is the time to get active in local, statewide and national healthy transportation issues.

Fenton facilitated the discussion among roundtable participants, encouraging them to share why transportation and community design issues are important to the groups they represent and their vision for a Healthier Helena.

“Healthy community planning for Helena, including more walkable, bikable and transit friendly streets, can increase opportunities for physical activity and reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and other health threats,” shared Dr. David Krainacker with the Helena Physician's Clinic and Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health Chair.

Melanie Reynolds with the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department adds to these public health concerns. “Active, safe, easy to-use, and flexible transportation options are essential for accessing health care services, staying healthy and preserving independence, establishing and maintaining social and family contacts, and general well-being,”

“Our current transportation policy and design guidelines remain excessively focused on a single transportation mode, contributing to increasingly sedentary lifestyles and poorer air quality,” said Cathy Costakis with the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program. “If we can provide streets that are complete for safe walking, and biking, more people will choose biking and walking for their short trips. An expanded public transit system will offer choices for longer trips, or provide access to services and community for those who are unable to get around in other ways. Shifting how we think about transportation systems will help address far reaching problems such as our dependency on oil, public health issues, and climate changes due to greenhouse gas emissions from traffic.”

“We are hearing both in Montana and across the nation that folks want healthy, clean, safe and sustainable transportation choices, both within and between communities; choices that will help get them to their jobs, affordable housing, healthcare and educational and recreational opportunities,” said Elizabeth Andrews, the Montana Representative for Transportation for America Campaign. “There are increasing demand for aggressive local and national policy as well as increased political will from local elected officials, state government and our Congressional Delegation to change the way we do transportation in Montana and across the country.”

The Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program, Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department and the Montana Transportation for America Campaign sponsored the roundtable event.

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