



## **Linking Health and Transportation: Voices of Oshkosh Walkers, Cyclists and Transit Users**

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Fox Valley Thrives, a local chapter of THRIVE WI, is an alliance between East Central WI Regional Planning Commission, ESTHER, and Outagamie and Winnebago County Public Health Departments

## Overview

The mission of Fox Valley Thrives (FVT) is to advance health equity through aligned efforts, relationship and capacity building, co-learning, and strategic action. The FVT Transportation Team is a subgroup of FVT working to improve equity and make healthier communities by focusing on the connections between transportation and health. In order to begin this work, the FVT Transportation Team conducted a series of focus groups to understand user perceptions of the Oshkosh area transportation system. These focus groups allowed us to better understand the connections between transportation and health, identify what facilities enhance or impede a person's ability to use walking, biking, and transit in the Fox Valley, and determine what changes might need to be made in the built environment to improve access to transportation.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of the five focus group conversations beginning with user's perceptions of the connections between transportation and health. Next, we detail participant perceptions of the advantages of biking, busing, driving, and walking to get around the Oshkosh community. The report includes participants' suggestions for improving transportation access and equity in the community and concludes with participant recommendations for connecting users with transportation planners and decision makers to improve the transportation system.

As a supplement to the focus group conversations, a follow up event with area employers was held to help us understand how employers might serve as partners in supporting the infrastructure changes needed to increase the use of active transportation. While the process and questions asked in this conversation were different from the focus groups, the data helps us to understand an additional perspective on active transportation in the community (see attached Appendix B for a summary of this conversation).

## Funding Support

Funding for this project was provided by the Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program (HWPP). HWPP is a component of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment and is administered by the Medical College of Wisconsin.

## Methodology

Five focus groups were held with participants who use different modes of transportation and are likely to travel to different locations including school, work, or accessing services in the community. A concerted effort was made to involve participants who do not own or operate their own vehicles and primarily rely on public transit, bicycle, walking, and wheeling as their primary form of transportation. While all participants used multiple modes of travel, participants reported their primary modes of travel as follows:

Primary Mode of Travel	Bus	Bike	Walk	Bus and Bike/Walk	Car	Taxi
Participants	11	3	2	12	19	1

Participant recruitment was conducted by the Fox Valley Thrives Transportation team members in partnership with staff at our host locations. Focus groups were conducted at five locations in the community: Fox Valley Technical College, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh Senior Center, Oshkosh Boys and Girls Club, and Marian Manor. There were 51 total participants across the focus groups, ranging in age, gender, and occupation. Participants were given a free bus token for attending the focus group conversations.

Focus group sessions were moderated by trained UW Oshkosh faculty (see Appendix A for focus group protocol). To ensure participant comfort in sharing their full opinions, the focus group conversations were not recorded but comprehensive notes were taken during the focus groups by members of the FVT transportation team. Following the focus group meetings, notes were analyzed to determine common themes across the focus groups. The common themes appear in the next section with sample statements drawn from the focus groups as appropriate.

## How are transportation and health linked?

Participants linked transportation with health in three primary ways. First, participants noted the direct connection between transportation and access to health related services including medical care, pharmacy and medication pick up, and healthy foods. Second, participants noted how transportation access directly interacts with mental and physical health. Finally, participants noted some increased use of biking and walking as a mode of transportation to improve or maintain health through increased physical activity.

## Transportation and Access to Services

- When asked about travel to and from medical appointments, participants felt that resources were available to meet these needs, but there was limited knowledge of these resources and they were less convenient and harder to navigate.
  - *“People going to the hospitals or doctors appointments are already feeling frail and don’t want to deal with the additional stress of riding the bus. They’ll take cabulance. People don’t know about the Advocap program, and if they do they have to go through a process of filling out paperwork. It’s a good resource, but not enough people are taking advantage of it. And they need more drivers. But people form relationships with these drivers. They feel very safe with this mode of transit.”*
  - *“Could we have special buses that travel to the hospitals or better on-call services to make this more convenient?”*
- Limited transportation can also limit access to healthy food and prescription medications. Delivery may help, but cost of delivery can be prohibitive for those on a fixed income.
  - *“People live in food deserts. There aren’t small stores here and there anywhere, you need to take the bus or drive.”*
  - *“Shopko and others are beginning to allow people to call in for delivery, but if you are on a limited income, you probably aren’t going to pay \$15 for delivery.”*
  - *“The food pantry has volunteers that will make deliveries.”*
  - *“We need more healthier options than restaurants, particularly downtown.”*

## Transportation and Health

- Participants reported that mobility and health issues can limit transportation choices. In addition, the complexities of transportation planning can lead to increased stress and anxiety for participants.
  - *“One of the things I’ve heard over the years is that people will use dial a ride or the bus to get to the doctor and then the doctor will order more tests and they only have so may dial a ride rides. Cabs and Running Inc. might get you there on time for the appointment, but then doesn’t pick you up in a timely manner.”*
  - *“People get isolated and just stay home because they are frustrated with transportation options and flexibility.”*

- While most users biked or walked because other options were unavailable or because biking or walking was more convenient, a few choice users mentioned health as a reason for walking and/or biking.
  - *"Biking can be healthy and fun."*

## Transportation by Bus

### What is working well with the bus system in Oshkosh?

- Free access for those working at or attending UW Oshkosh or Fox Valley Technical College.
  - *"Students get to ride for free."*
  - *"You can ride for free with a Titan Card."*
  - *"You don't have to buy the \$300 parking permit."*
- It is possible to get around town and access services.
  - *"The bus goes around the city and you can get where you want to go."*
  - *"I moved to Oshkosh because they had a good bus service."*
  - *"It's easy to get maps and schedules. When you get on, they're right behind the bus driver."*
- People feel safe riding the bus.
  - *"The bus feels safe – there are so many people on there."*
  - *"I can enjoy the ride without having to worry about the traffic."*
- Drivers are knowledgeable and friendly.
  - *"When you talk to them, they'll tell you how to get around. They're mellow and easy to talk to."*
  - *"The drivers are kind and sociable."*
- Bike racks on buses increase transportation options.
  - *"It's nice to be able to put bikes on the bus, unless the rack is already full. Then you have to wait for the next one."*
  - *"I bike all the time and take the bus– I do both. I'll be riding someplace and I find that I'm worn out or need to get on the bus."*

- Buses are accessible for those with mobility challenges.
  - *"It's nice that the buses are able to kneel to accommodate wheelchairs and others who can't make the big step, like people with walkers."*

## What changes are needed with the bus system in Oshkosh?

- Bus service that runs later in the evening and on Sundays.
  - *"If I'm at a friend's house, I can't ride the bus home after 6."*
  - *"I can't take a night shift at work because I can't get home."*
- Increased bus shelters, more public space, and better accessibility at bus stops.
  - Limited resources at bus stops and long times between bus transfers are particularly difficult for the elderly, disabled, and parents traveling with children. There is not a carriage walk or sidewalk at every bus stop which is a major issue for people with mobility devices.
    - *"I have a hard time running errands in harsh weather conditions. Even sun and heat can be a barrier without a bus shelter."*
  - Participants reported that at some stops, they had to choose between standing on the sidewalk, on the street, or on someone's private property.
    - *"Stops aren't always in places where people have an area to stand and there is no seating which can be a major issue for people with disabilities."*
  - Better signage and lighting at bus stops.
    - *"Some stops are just a sign and a pole." "It is hard to see in the dark."*
  - A few bus stops were highlighted repeatedly as particularly problematic. Including the stops at Walmart, Bethel Homes, businesses on Koeller Street, and stops near roundabouts.
    - *"The new bus stop at Walmart has people concerned. It's out on the frontage road now where it's very busy. They don't plow that area well and people have to walk up one of the driveways."*
- Youth being able to ride the city bus for free.
  - *"Where I'm from, we used to have an ID card we could scan and ride the bus to school. It was easy and free. We should have that here."*
  - *"Hunting the money down for bus fare is a pain."*
- Bus service route change recommendations were sometimes in conflict. While some participants wanted more direct routes, others wanted more stops on their routes.

- More direct routes and more stops on Route 9 where there are really long distances between stops.
  - *"I don't go to Shopko because it is a pain to get there."*
  - *"I can't get to my friend's house on the other (West) side of town."*
- Increased options for those combining biking, walking, and busing.
  - While participants appreciated the bike racks on buses and increased accessibility of the new kneeling buses, they were concerned about sufficient bike storage and space for strollers on buses as well as potential theft of bikes/strollers that could not fit on the bus and had to be left at a bus stop.
- Increased bus access throughout the Fox Valley.
  - Transit to Neenah and Appleton: Participants acknowledged bus transportation was available to Neenah and Appleton; however, they also found the routes to be long and difficult.
    - *"We need an interconnective system that incorporates Fox Valley and other areas such as train or bus. We need a more regional approach."*
  - Transit to Industrial Parks in Oshkosh
    - *"A lot of people who work in the industrial park or do shift work can't get a bus home." "No buses go to the industrial park and businesses are having a hard time getting employees."*
- Better communication and education about riding transit.
  - *"People see the party buses, tavern league buses, late night buses - and people don't understand they aren't for everyone."*
  - *"Using the bus website can be confusing, maps don't display the best route, buses change numbers/routes throughout the day."*
  - Participants suggested several possible solutions including more frequent announcements on buses made by drivers, education about reading route maps, increased availability of route maps at bus stops and online, increased education about ParaTransit and better communication about route changes due to construction.

## Transportation by Bicycle

### What is working well with biking in Oshkosh?

- Biking for health/community/sustainability.
  - *"There seem to be more people doing rides – like the Oshkosh Slow Roll. It's more to promote the taverns, but it's a lot of fun to see 60 bikes going down the road."*
- Participants appreciated the bike lanes, sharrows and option to ride on the sidewalks.
  - *"Oshkosh is a very comfortable city to bicycle in versus other cities."*
  - *"There are some added bike lanes in Oshkosh, but not everywhere. Sidewalks are used more primarily for safety."*
  - *"You can ride on the sidewalks in Oshkosh. I've lived all over the country and you can never ride on the sidewalk"*
- While participants were appreciative of being able to ride on the sidewalks, many shared that it raises other concerns, such as potential pedestrian collisions when riding around a blind corner.
  - *A participant shared that she and a friend had worked at Bemis. They would take the bus there with their bikes on the rack and then ride the bikes home because the buses were no longer running. They rode on the road for most of the route home, but would ride on the sidewalk when the roads didn't seem safe or they were concerned about people opening car doors. She seemed very concerned about walkers on the sidewalk and that "if you hit someone on sidewalk with your bike you can be sued."*

### What changes are needed to improve bicycle transportation in Oshkosh?

- More education around bike lanes is needed for all groups, particularly bikers and drivers.
  - *"The bike lanes make it easier for walkers, but harders for bikers. I don't feel safe in the bike lane with the cars right there."*
  - *"Bikers aren't aware of drivers. Drivers aren't aware of bikers."*
  - *"I think it is hard for people to adjust to some of the changes on the roads. You can still see some of the old lines and it's been confusing for drivers to figure out."*



- Increased enforcement of road sharing rules for both bikers and drivers.
  - *"The Oshkosh Police are not good about enforcing biking or pedestrian laws. Sometimes they don't follow those laws themselves – like yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks."*
  - *"I had a bike accident where someone hit me – luckily not me, but my bike. She was not ticketed and the cop was frustrated by the complaint for enforcement of the rules."*
- Reworked infrastructure to prioritize bikes and buses and not cars.
  - *"I'd like to see the public space given back to everybody, not just car riders, wider sidewalks and larger bike lanes with less parking space would be an incentive not to drive cars."*
  - *"I'd like to see Main between Irving and River closed to driving."*
  - *"In the Netherlands, we have a bike lane, then a bus lane and then cars. It doesn't feel safe to be driving on the road right next to cars."*
- Increased low-cost or free access to bikes and bike accessories.
  - Youth and others suggested a rental bike system for those who could not afford bikes.
    - *"Bike rental options would be environmentally friendly and easier to use."*
  - Winnebago Bicycle downtown was reported as providing affordable bike repairs to those in need. Access to affordable bike repair and parts is important to participants.
- Increased lighting and emergency phone access: Increased trails, particularly the riverwalk were appreciated, but concerns were raised about the decking and lack of lighting or emergency phone access on the newly opened riverwalk.
  - *"I didn't appreciate the decking used by Becket's and farther down. It's very slippery when wet."*
- While biking options exist during warmer months, there is a perceived lack of consideration for those who bike year-round.
  - *"In the winter time when people shovel [and plow] they fill the bike lanes. They throw the snow on top of the bike racks on campus."*
- Transportation from the West Side to the East side is particularly challenging. Major streets offer the most direct path but require biking around roundabouts.
  - *"People driving aren't looking. One guy might stop, but if the guy next to him doesn't stop, you'll get killed. I try to take longer routes that avoid the roundabouts."*

- *"We need safer bike routes, particularly the East-West Section."*
- Increased bike racks and availability of locks, particularly at medical facilities and major shopping centers. Young people in particular reported problems getting bikes stolen and they could not afford bike locks.

## Transportation by Automobile

### What is working well with automobile transportation in Oshkosh?

- While automobile transportation was not a major focus of the conversation, participants often contrasted driving with other forms of transportation and highlighted convenience as the main advantage of driving.
  - *"There's plenty of parking here. Parking is always available, unlike other cities, like Madison."*
  - *"You go where you want, when you want."*

### What changes are needed to improve automobile transportation in Oshkosh?

- Increased opportunities for ride sharing and carpooling among students and workers. Students would like to see organizational support to set up carpooling. Perhaps a mobile app that could be used among students who were willing to ride share.
  - *"Some businesses are trying to encourage more ride sharing. The challenge is if you have kids or aging parents and there is an emergency...having your own transportation is important."*
- More reliable cab services and cab services that don't require 24 hours to schedule a pick up. While some participants had no problem scheduling a pick up 24 hours out, others found this frustrating. It was also difficult to schedule return rides when the length of doctor's appointments was uncertain, but not scheduling often lead to a long wait time.
- Increased education and awareness about financial support for transit.
  - Participants shared that a local taxi service will give you a reduced ride if you work over 30-35 hours per week, but few other participants had heard of this option.
  - Participants shared a partner program with Advocap that was under resourced and under utilized.
    - *"People going to the hospitals or doctor's appointments are already feeling frail and don't want to deal with the additional stress of riding the bus. They'll take cabulance."*

- *"People don't know about the Advocap program, and if they do they have to go through a process of filling out paperwork. It's a good resource, but not enough people are taking advantage of it. They need more drivers."*

## Transportation by Foot

### What is working well with walking in Oshkosh?

- Downtown Oshkosh is walkable.
  - *"Oshkosh is a nice city to walk in....I can walk to the library. I can walk to my bank. It's nice."*
  - *"You don't need a car to get around downtown."*
- The Riverwalk and trails provide exercise options.
  - *"I like to walk for exercise, time to think – stroll along the river."*

### What changes are needed to improve walking in Oshkosh?

- Sidewalk improvements.
  - *"The condition of the sidewalks – and the curb cuts are awful."*
  - *"Sometimes it is difficult walking with a walker because the sidewalks are so uneven. Some of the sidewalks are on a slant, so that makes it harder."*
- Crosswalks improvements and safer use of crosswalks by both walkers and drivers.
  - *"People don't stop for crosswalks that are not painted."*
  - *"Drivers not yielding at crosswalks is a problem for walkers"*
  - *"There are numerous intersections without crosswalk functions" (Scott and Elmwood)*
  - *"Not everyone uses the crosswalk button and students (UWO) don't follow rules at controlled intersections."*
- Safer roundabout crossings.
  - *"Some places you can't get across the street or the roundabout for a while."*
  - *"I don't like the roundabout flags."*
  - *"I try to stay away from the roundabouts."*

## Perceived Safety Hazards

In addition to the specific advantages and challenges for each of the above modes of transportation, participants highlighted two particular areas that cut across multiple modes of transportation.

### Difficult Street Crossings or High Traffic Areas

- Youth highlighted difficulties crossing Main Street due to busy traffic as well as crossing Linwood Avenue on their way to North High School. Crossing Jackson Street in front of Kwik Trip on Linwood was especially challenging.
- Witzel and Westhaven - residents in the area have to cross a busy intersection to get to a bus stop.
- Roundabouts - especially for those who live near them and have to get in and out of driveways, specifically on Jackson and Murdock.
- Vine Street parking near campus “needs to be one-way and parking or just no parking.”
- Drawbridges can make traffic back up which is difficult for bikers and pedestrians to cross (particularly the Wiowash trail crossing on Highway 21).

### Isolated Areas with Limited Lighting, Perceived Crime or Limited Emergency Communication Access

- The Riverwalk or Wiowash Trail.
  - *“The Riverwalk is beautiful, but not everyone has a cell phone. It would be a great addition to the Riverwalk and WIOWASH trail to have the blue light emergency phones like you have on campus.”*
- Lighting in Downtown Area.
  - *“We need more lighting in the area between Main Street and the railroad tracks. There are a ton of people who will not go out at night because they don’t feel safe.”*
- Perceived Crime at Nighttime.
  - *“Evenings or night if you’re out at night with friends, you hear about a lot of crime that happens at night.”*
  - *“I will not walk down Cherry at night. I have the option to do that and drive.”*

## Participant Ideas for Advocacy and Engagement

While some participants were excited to get involved in potentially changing the system, others perceived the system as inflexible and their voices as powerless. This suggests some advocacy work may need to be done to help participants organize and take action. Several actions were discussed in the focus groups.

- **Photomapping:** Participants were largely skeptical of photomapping. While most seemed to have camera phones, they described taking pictures of their transit journey as “weird.”
- **Video Stories:** Some participants would be willing to share their stories in a video-recorded interview. Participants suggested standing downtown at the bus hub with a video camera and inviting riders to give their viewpoints on the system or sending people out to video record traffic at the common intersections at busy times. A few key stories from the focus groups are captured in the boxes to the right.
- **Meetings with Decision Makers:** While youth participants were skeptical of letter writing, they were willing to call or speak to a decision maker.
- **Decision makers riding and using transit:** Participants felt that decision makers should experience what taking transit is truly like and how hard it can be, especially when taking children or traveling with disabilities.
  - *“Have all the city council members try to get to their next meeting on a bicycle.”*
  - *“Decision makers should get out and experience the system.”*

### Transit Challenges

*“I just got my first job at the outlet mall, but my only transportation is by bus or bicycle and I live downtown. My manager volunteered to drive me home sometimes, but if he isn't available, I can't work a night shift, so my hours will be really limited. ”*

- 16 year old focus group participant

*“To travel from Oshkosh for my college class, I would have to leave at 9:00 am to make it to a 12:30 class on Appleton FVTC Campus and then wouldn't get home until 7pm. It is Incredibly hard to make it to Appleton Campus with transit, it truly takes your entire day, so I had to drop out of the class.”*

- Fox Valley Technical College Student

## Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

1. What is your first name? How do you primarily travel around Oshkosh?
2. Imagine someone was moving to Oshkosh and they were curious about how to get around. What would you say are the advantages of your primary mode of transportation? What are the disadvantages of your primary mode of transportation?
3. We want to start thinking a bit more about how transportation influences our lives and we'd like you to draw a map of where you go and how you get there. You can keep it fairly simple - we just want an idea of how you get around (Provide model).
  - a. Let's look at the maps a bit. How do you decide how to travel to your destination?
  - b. Where don't you ever go, or go as often as you like, because it is hard to get there?
    - i. In your opinion, **do we need any changes** in our transportation system in this community to ensure everyone can get access to good paying jobs they need?
  - c. What, if anything, could be done in our community to make traveling around easier for you?
  - d. In this group, we don't have anyone or very many people who (walk/bike/wheel/transit), **why don't we use that mode of transportation very often?** What, if anything, could be done in our community to encourage you to use that mode of transportation more?
  - e. When or where do you feel **most safe** traveling around the community?  
When or where do you feel least safe when traveling around the community?  
What could be done to make you feel safer?

### Transportation and Health Equity

We want to explore the connections between transportation and health a bit more. Let's begin by talking about how your transportation options help you (or prevent you) from being healthy.

- a. For you, do you ever think about **your personal health** when choosing how you will travel to places?
- b. One of the things we might do to stay healthy is to **visit the doctor, dentist, or other health care providers**. Are you able to travel to these types of places whenever you might need to?

- c. Other things we might do to stay healthy are to go **to the gym, park, farmers market, or grocery store**. Are you able to travel to these places whenever you might need to?
- d. When we think about health, we also want to think about **staying connected and getting the social support we need**. We might visit friends, join a faith community, or some other social group. Are you able to travel to make connections with others whenever you might need to do so?
- e. If you have **friends or family members** that you care for, are you able to take them to these places when you might need to do so?
- f. In your opinion, do we need any **changes** in our transportation system in this community to ensure everyone can get the medical care they need?
- g. In your opinion, do we need any changes in our transportation system in this community to ensure everyone can get access to the healthy food they need?

### Advocacy and User Engagement

One of the goals of this project is to share what we learn to make changes that might improve transportation and access to services in this community. We have talked about this a bit already, but **what's one thing that could change in your community that would make it easier for you to get around?**

- a. We want to think about how your stories can best be shared with the “people in charge.” We are thinking both about those who plan the transportation systems as well as the legislators, city council members, and lawmakers that make decisions about how we pay for transportation systems. We honestly aren't sure what is the best way to connect the primary users of the system with those who are making the decisions. What ideas do you have for sharing stories or helping decision makers better understand the challenges you encounter on a regular basis?
  - i. Possible follow ups:
    1. Ask about taking photos of their transportation journey?
    2. Show a story map and get reactions?
    3. How would you feel about writing a letter to these decision makers?
    4. How would you feel about meeting directly with a decision maker?
    5. How would you feel about participating in a video or written story that could be shared with decision makers?

**Wrap up Question** - What are we missing? What didn't we ask about the connections between transportation, health, and your life experiences? Is there anything else you feel we need to know?

## Appendix B: Employer Event

The employer event was incorporated into an ongoing series called the Employee Wellness Learning Circle, coordinated in conjunction with Oshkosh Area Businesses Focused on Health, Inc., Well City Fox Cities, and The Weight of the Fox Valley. The series brings together area HR professionals and other organizational leaders for professional development around a variety of themes. The theme of this event was engaging employees in active transportation to improve health. Attendees were asked to register online for the event and complete a short survey. The event began with panel discussions about active transportation and biking and walking infrastructure. Small group conversations were then held to discuss active transportation initiatives and challenges.

**Pre Event Survey:** The majority of participants felt that their workplaces were fairly accessible via walking, bicycling, or transit (see Table 1). While two participants rated their employers as having strong programs to encourage active transportation, most participants placed their workplace's efforts to engage employees in active transportation as being in the beginner or developing stage (see Table 2). Participants viewed their workplace wellness efforts as strong or developing, with only one participant placing their workplace wellness efforts in the beginning stage (see Table 3). The contrast between these two findings suggests that most participants might not consider employee use of active transportation as a component of an employee wellness program.

Table 1

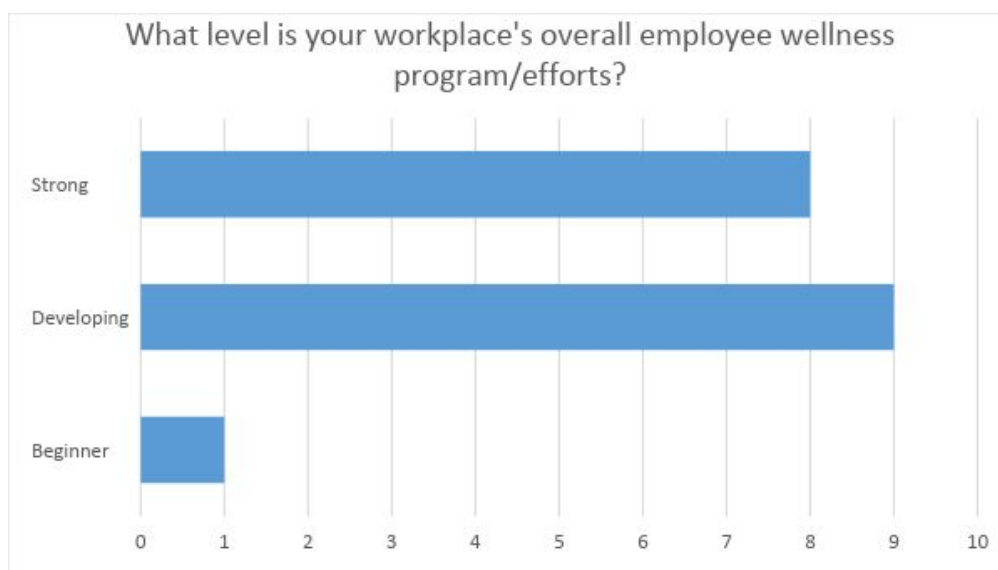




Table 2



Table 3



Survey comments further reinforced this and showed that many participants had not considered the role of active transportation in an overall workplace wellness program. In many cases, participants had not considered implementing any sort of incentive program to encourage active transportation (See Table 4). One participant noted, "We have never thought of implementing something like that." In other cases, participants highlighted liability concerns or pragmatic concerns related to weather and lack of community infrastructure to support biking or walking to work. A participant noted, "We have many employees who travel from long distances away," and participants also highlighted the challenges of walking and biking in winter weather.

Table 4



## Conversation Themes

### How are employers encouraging use of active transportation?

While most participants noted that their employers were not yet engaging in formal or informal programs to encourage employee use of active transportation, a few participants cited programs in their workplaces. Programs seemed to target the knowledge and logistical concerns that would prevent employees from using active transportation.

- Educating employees about using active transportation
  - *"We are providing education. Helping employees know where facilities are to store gear, shower, etc."*
  - *"We provide education programs on how to be safe."*
- Encouraging use of public transit/busing
  - *"We don't write employees up if they are late from using the buses."*
  - *"Our company is doing challenges and team building activities where we ride the bus."*
- Encouraging use of biking
  - *"We provide a bike share program for employees to check out free bikes to ride. We also offer bike registration and heated bike lockers."*
  - *"Employees are encouraged to take a group "Lunch Brake" where they all ride to lunch together."*
  - *"We installed employee bike racks."*
- Encouraging walking
  - *"Walking meetings can help."*

## What prevents employers from encouraging employee use of active transportation?

- **Liability concerns:** participants wondered whether employers are liable if they encourage employees to bike or walk to work or during the work day. They expressed concern over the potential liability issues.
- **Logistics concerns:** participants recognized four primary logistical concerns that prevented greater encouragement.
  - Bike storage and maintenance concerns. Participants discussed the need for employers to consider where personal bikes might be stored or where bikes for an employer checkout program might be stored and maintained.
  - Travel time concerns. Active transportation would require additional time for employee travel both to and from work, but also to lunch (for Lunch Brake rides) or for walking meetings and participants expressed concerns that some managers might not support this additional time.
  - Winter weather concerns. In a state with many months of wet and cold winter weather, participants expressed concern about the feasibility of biking and walking outside of summer months.
  - Personal hygiene concerns. Participants recognized that employees who use active transportation to commute to work might need additional access to showers or locker rooms to transition from their workout to their work day.
- **Infrastructure concerns:** Participants noted very similar infrastructure concerns to those highlighted by the participants in the overall focus group conversations. These included:
  - Lack of weekend and evening bus service.
  - Lack of bus service between area municipalities.
  - Lack of sidewalks and bike lanes to and from the workplace from bus stops as well as from employee residences.
  - Sidewalks that are unsafe to use due to ice/puddles, cracks or low hanging branches.



- Lack of driver education for how to maneuver a vehicle around a bus or bike lane creating hazards for users of active transportation.
- **Lack of knowledge:** As noted in the summary of the survey, some participants had not really considered the role of active transportation in their workplace wellness program and they also expressed concern about employee lack of knowledge about how to access public transportation and use active transportation.



## What changes are needed in our local transportation system?

Across all conversations, those with users of active transportation and the employers who might encourage use of active transportation, similar infrastructure concerns were identified. Future work on how to pull these two groups together for system change is recommended to secure the following changes:

- **Public Transit/Busing**
  - Extended public transit hours
  - More unified transit system between local communities as well as to major metropolitan areas within the state
  - Discounted rates for transit systems
  - Free days to try public transit
  - Increased education on how to ride public transit
  - Increased public transit, such as Uber/Lyft contracts with the city
- **Biking/Walking**
  - Better sidewalk maintenance
  - Safe and secure bike parking
  - More education on bike safety for both riders and drivers
  - City bike sharing programs

## About Fox Valley Thrives

Fox Valley Thrives (FVT) is a regional alliance working to advance health equity through aligned efforts, relationship and capacity building, co-learning, and strategic action. Our alliance consists of local public health professionals, planners, community organizers, equity-focused organizations, academics, and key stakeholders. Through policy and systems change, FVT aims to reduce the disparate/inequitable impact of upstream factors such as (but not limited to) race, income, education, gender, sexual orientation, and immigration status to influence policies and practices that bring about greater health equity.

The FVT Transportation Team is working to raise the voices of people who use walking, biking and transit as their main mode of transportation in order to improve decision-making processes and transportation access. By including their experiences in planning, design and construction, the Team will (1) identify what facilities enhance or impede a person's ability to use walking, biking, transit, (2) determine what changes might need to be made in built environment to improve access to transportation, and (3) dispel common myths related to biking, walking, and using transit through qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis and dissemination. The Team hopes to improve the health of residents and the community through these efforts.

Transport strategies that prioritize public transport, and safe walking and bicycling networks can support physical activity and reduce traffic injuries. Healthier transport strategies can also yield health equity gains by providing vulnerable groups with greater access to social and economic opportunities, particularly for people who lack access to a private vehicle such as people with lower incomes, immigrants/refugees, people with disabilities, seniors, and children.

## About Our Partners

Fox Valley Thrives Transportation Team thanks our community partners who hosted focus group conversations with people who use walking, bicycling and transit as a mode of transportation. The Team identified priority populations and the focus groups would not have been the same without their partnership. Organizations that hosted the focus groups include: The Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh, Marian Manor (part of The Oshkosh/Winnebago County Housing Authority), The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh Seniors Center, and Fox Valley Technical College (Riverside Campus).

The Team also thanks Oshkosh Area Businesses Focused on Health, Inc. for co-hosting the Employee Wellness Learning Circle on engaging employees in active transportation. The Team was energized by the potential for future collaboration between employers and active transportation users.

## About the Authors

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