

Lessons on Communicating at the Interface between Transportation and Public Health

At session: Federal and State Transportation Planning for Public Health: How to Win Reform.

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Presenter:

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Based on APHA work of Susan Polan, Eloisa Raynault, and Fenton



Transportation and Community Health Affect Human Health

- Physical Activity-opportunity for physical activity is being engineered out of daily life
- Safety-traffic injuries and deaths (including bike and pedestrian injuries) are a public health concern
- Air Quality-associated with health issues including asthma, respiratory diseases and cancer
- Social and health Inequalities-transportation and land use policies are imperative to reach equality

Source: APHA, At the Intersection of Public Health and

IOM recommendation #8*

- All partners within the public Health System should place special emphasis on communication as a critical core competency of public health practice.

*Source: Institute of Medicine, The Future of Public's Health in the 21st Century, 2003

Understanding Our Audience



In Transportation Policy

Our audiences include

- Politicians/Decisionmakers
- Impacted communities
- Transportation planners

HIA, A tool for the public health practioner

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) provides essential information for decisionmakers
- Health impact assessment is a combination of methods to examine formally the potential health effects of a proposed policy, program, or project.*

*Source: B Cole and J Fielding, “Health Impact Assessment: A tool to Help Policy Makers Understand Health Beyond Health Care”, Annual Review of Public Health, 2007.

Definition of an HIA

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

A combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a policy, program, or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO), 1999.



San Francisco: Still/Lyell Freeway

- Issue: PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights) suspected that Excelsior residents were *disproportionately exposed to traffic-related impacts*, such as air pollution. PODER, the SFPDHD, and UCB's School of Public Health developed a community-based HIA of traffic in this neighborhood.



Source: http://www.sfphes.org/PODER/PODER_Solutions.htm

San Francisco: Still/Lyell Freeway

Recs: Advocating that the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA):

- Reroute cleaner hybrid electric buses to southeast San Francisco
- Reroute trucks away streets where people in the community live
- Establish a network of truck routes; facilitate the efficient flow of truck traffic through a community planning process that brings together transportation planners, the health department, trucking representatives, enforcement officials, and the community

■ Unique Tools Used:

- Door-to-door community surveys
- Traffic counts
- Community photography, Oral histories
- Outdoor air quality and noise modeling
- Publicly available data



Source: http://www.sfphes.org/PODER/PODER_Solutions.htm

Portland: Columbia River Crossing

- Issue: HIA Workgroup chose the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as the subject. Four alternatives to the present I-5 bridge that connects southwest Washington to Portland.
- Sample Health Impacts:
 - Traffic volumes in 2030 impact air quality, noise pollution, obesity, and safety.
 - More public transportation will improve the mobility of vulnerable populations.
 - Harmful noise levels from traffic are associated with increases in chronic diseases and cognitive functioning.



Portland: Columbia River Crossing

- Recs: Maximize use of Light Rail Transit, Transit that serve low income and minority populations, Safe and accessible bike and pedestrian facilities
- Status: After months of negotiations, CRC planners have scaled back the crossing to ten lanes.
 - *Portland Observer*: “The proposal drew impassioned outcries that the new interchange would adversely affect the large population of seniors and home-bound people who live on the island. Residents also worried that it would make their community even more isolated and remove vital services, like nearby pharmacies that many depend on.”
 - “*The Oregonian*: A coalition suggested that Congress eliminate money for the new Columbia River Crossing as part of a package of cuts ..”



South Lincoln: Redevelopment

- Issue: South Lincoln homes (CO) is a low-income housing redevelopment project near a new light rail station; funded by Denver Housing Authority.
- Population:
 - 38% live in poverty
 - 50% of children are poor
 - 24% are obese
 - 62% have health care coverage



South Lincoln: Redevelopment

- Unique Tools Used: The Healthy Development Measurement Tool (HDMT) was used as the guide for the HIA and master plan because of its comprehensiveness and focus on social equity issues.
- Positive outcomes: City Council member's engagement led to policy change in the planning agency so that public health considerations are required in redevelopment projects.



St. Paul: Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Line

- Issue: Land along the Corridor must be rezoned for a mix of buildings to match the plan's intended improvements to the community.
- Concerns consistently raised by local communities include:
 - Protection from displacement for residents and businesses
 - Maintenance and expansion of bus service
 - Safe, convenient street crossings for pedestrians and other neighborhood safety concerns
 - Integration of East Side St. Paul in light rail benefits and opportunities



Source: <http://minnesota.publicradio.org>

St. Paul: Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Line

The Healthy Corridor for All project is led by ISALAH, a faith-based organization made up of 90 member congregations. A Community Steering Committee represents people and organizations along the Central Corridor Light Rail route. Preliminary recommendations relate to jobs, business, protection of residents from impact of gentrification, affordable and accessible transportation.



Source: <http://minnesota.publicradio.org>

What has been learned?

- Promote visionary policy changes and programs
- Community organizing and participation is critical
- Capitalize on competition between cities and regions
- Seek out non-traditional partners
- Initial resistance is typical
- Inspiration goes a long way









APHA and Fenton looked at





- Communication between transportation and public health professionals

Community Leaders' Concerns



-  Homes far from jobs
-  Changing demographics
-  Crumbling infrastructure
-  Rising prices
-  Access to services
-  Business interests supported

Transportation Planners' Concerns

-  **Accountability:** Limited budget
-  **Efficiency:** How to plan for existing cars on the road
-  **Flexibility:** Offering options
-  **Safety and security:** All modes of transportation



Health Leaders Concerns



- 🚗 Obesity/Chronic disease
 - 🚗 Obesity/overweight societal cost ~ \$117 billion & the cost of inactivity ~ \$76 billion
- 🚗 Safety
 - 🚗 Traffic injuries and fatalities ~ \$200 billion
- 🚗 Air Quality
 - 🚗 Health problems from transportation related poor air quality \$40 - \$64 billion
- 🚗 Access and Equity
 - 🚗 Exacerbating poverty and health inequities
- 🚗 Safe places to walk, play, congregate

Research Questions

- **How do transportation professionals think and/or talk about public health?**
- **How do the fields of public health and transportation communicate with each other?**
- **How can we improve the ways public health and transportation communicate with each other?**

Research Methodology

- Review existing transportation and public health communications materials, draft messages
- Media coverage of transportation debates
- Online survey focusing on transportation, planning, public health, advocacy – 769 responses
- 20 one-on-one interviews with key representatives of:
 - Transportation
 - Public Health
 - Land Use

What impacts transportation planning?

“Everybody wants to keep cars moving, sometimes to the detriment of people.”

What issues override public health?

“Limited funding with many competing interests.”

“Transportation planners’ emphasis is on moving cars, not people.”

“Domination by cars is entrenched in planning. It’s common for planners to say they’ll ‘improve the roadways,’ when all they’re doing is widening the road, which creates more barriers to other modes of transportation, forcing more people into cars, and creates a future need to widen the road.”

How does the transportation field view public health?

“As a separate issue, not part of the core mission.”

“Unrealistic.”

“Mostly benign and somewhat naive and uneducated about ‘the way things are...’”

“As interlopers. I think that public health has a valuable message but is being pretty heavy-handed in pushing their agenda and demanding things be done their way.”

What did the research tell us?

- 🚗 Impacts Transportation Planning
 - 🚗 Everybody wants to keep cars moving, sometimes to the detriment of people.
- 🚗 Issues Override Public Health
 - 🚗 Everything. Domination by cars is entrenched in planning. It's common for planners to say they'll 'improve the roadways,' when all they're doing is widening the road, which creates more barriers to other modes of transportation, forcing more people into cars, and creates a future need to widen the road.
- 🚗 How is Public Health Viewed
 - 🚗 As interlopers. I think that public health has a valuable message but is being pretty heavy-handed in pushing their agenda and demanding things be done their way.
 - 🚗 Mostly benign and somewhat naive and uneducated about the way things are...



Guiding Principles

Principle 1: Meet Them Where They Are



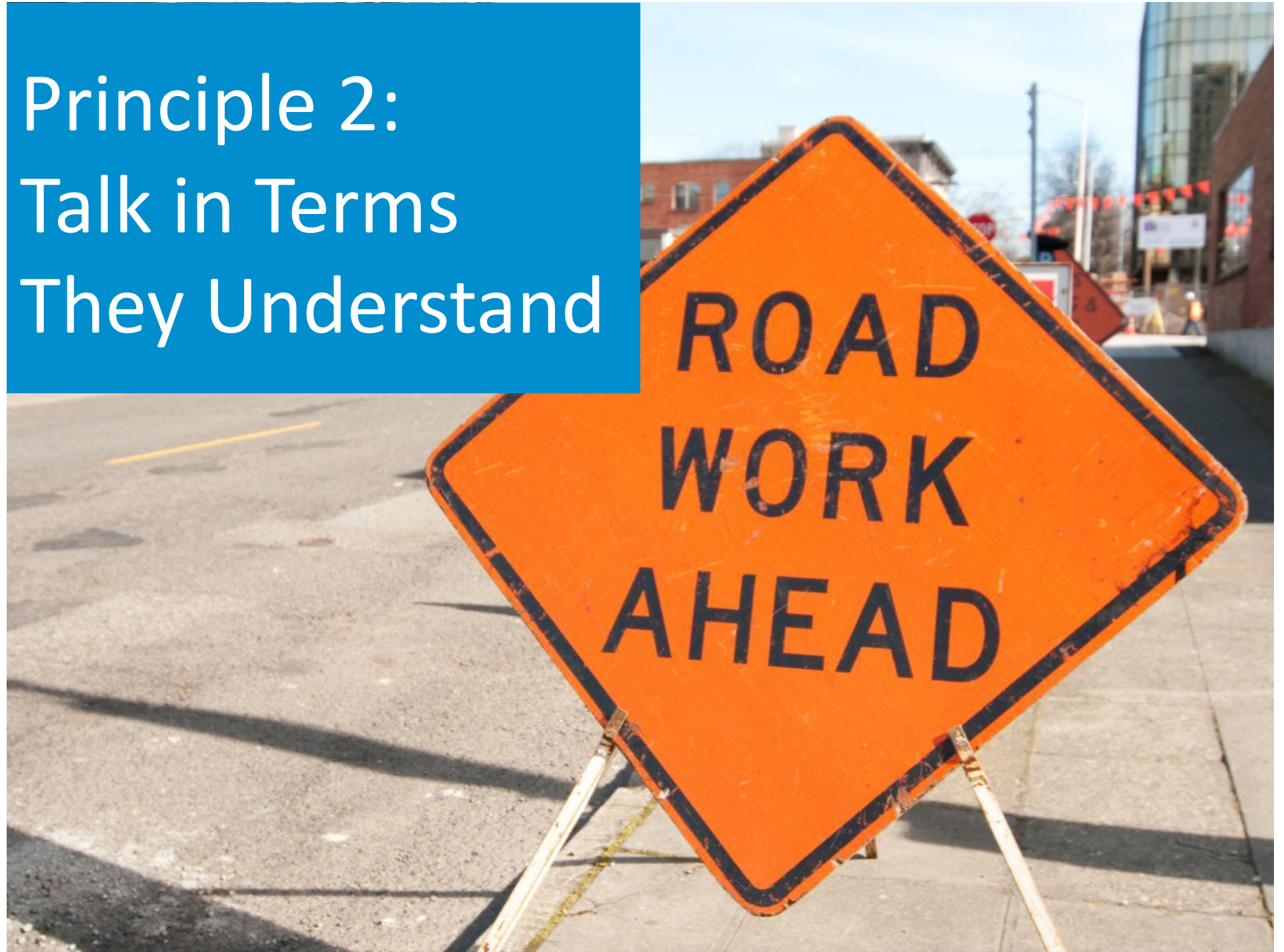
Meet Them Where They Are

“Start with what resonates with departments of transportation. If we want to influence them, we have to tie this stuff back to what they care about. Say to them, if we can get people out of cars, it will help with your congestion problems, save your funding, etc. More people in cars equals a greater need for roads which eventually equals more money than you have to spend.”

Meet Them Where They Are

- 🚌 Providing more options for getting around helps to keep roads safe and in good shape.
 - 🚌 It lets people take public transit, walk or bike, reducing traffic and decreasing roadway wear and tear.
 - 🚌 More options make it easier, more convenient and more affordable for everyone to get around – drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

Principle 2:
Talk in Terms
They Understand



Talk in Terms They Understand

“The prevailing attitude is, cars pay for the road and everyone else is getting a free ride. It’s actually the opposite – pedestrians and cyclists save communities from having to pave more roads! It is far cheaper to build environments where people can walk and bike than to build one bigger intersection. We’d all be better off if we found a better way.”

Talk in Terms They Understand

- 🚌 At every level, we need to be serious about how limited transportation dollars get spent.
 - 🚌 America needs major infrastructure investment in the coming years.
 - 🚌 We're expected to do a lot with little.
 - 🚌 However, this also provides us with an opportunity to be creative and think in new ways about how we design our transportation systems going forward.

Principle 3: Then Own Your Own Space



Then Own Your Own Space

“The exploding cost of health care is showing if we don’t move toward preventive health (obesity, diabetes, lack of opportunities to exercise, levels of isolation as a result of sprawl and no public transportation), and build neighborhoods right, health care costs soar. Which makes all of our economy slow. We can’t afford not to have healthy people.”

Then Own Your Own Space (Pt 1)

- 🚌 Giving people options for getting around is really an investment in health.
 - 🚌 Trails for runners, bike lanes for commuters and sidewalks for a stroll to the store all provide opportunities to incorporate exercise into everyday life, combating obesity while cutting air pollution.
 - 🚌 And a healthy community saves money – it makes good business sense to consider issues like obesity, diabetes, safety and air quality when we make transportation decisions.

Three Principles

1. Meet Them Where They Are
2. Talk in Terms They Understand
3. Then Own Your Own Space

Topline Messages



Meet Them Where They Are

- Providing more options for getting around helps to keep roads safe and in good shape.
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Then Own Your Own Space (Pt 2)

- *Make it local*

- *[Specific transportation investment]* is really an investment in preventive health care. It will make our community healthier, which isn't just good policy today – it will reduce health care costs tomorrow.
- *[Specific transportation investment]* will give people more options to get around and lighten the pressure on household budgets.
- *[Specific transportation investment]* would ease pressure on our streets and highways, which means fewer headaches and safer conditions for drivers on the road.
- *[Specific transportation investment]* will make driving, riding, biking and walking all more convenient.

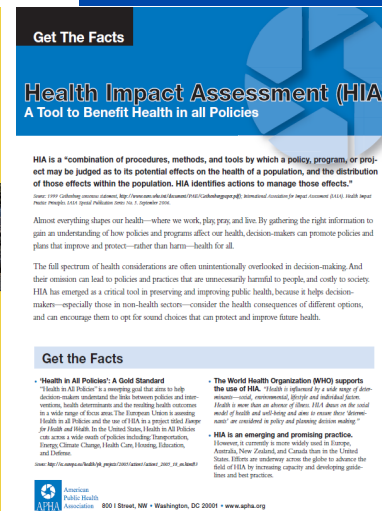
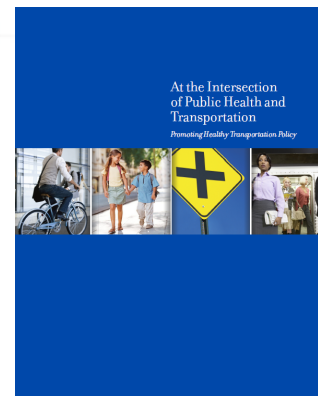
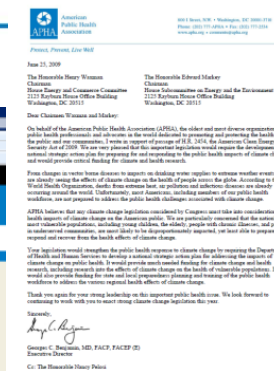
Final Thought



APHA Transportation Resources

- Factsheets
- Letters
- Reports
- Webinars
- Newsletter
- Legislative language
- APHA websites

www.apha.org/transportation



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