



Walkable Washington

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For information about Walkable Washington and other Feet First programs

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Case Study

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The Walkable Washington program grew out of the Feet First Cities Program. It showcases exceptional pedestrian-oriented improvements, community groups and outreach programs; maintains a statewide network for key contacts and stakeholders including an annual symposium; and provides assistance with Safe Routes to School, walking audits and other educational activities and programs.



Yakima County Complete Streets Yakima, WA

Description and purpose

Complete Streets is a national movement that promotes safety and accessibility for all users including cars, trucks, cyclists, walkers, the elderly, children, the disabled, and public transit users. Within Washington State, a growing number of communities have Complete Streets ordinances, but many communities are still unaware of walkability issues. For example, there are over 500 miles of Main Streets that dangerously and inaccessibly double as Washington State Highways. Fortunately there are a number of Federal and State funding options to implement Complete Streets projects through organizations such as the Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This past April, the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) kicked-off their complete streets program with a one day Central Washington Complete Streets Workshop, funded by funded by a Community Transformation Grant through the Yakima Health District (YHD). After receiving positive feedback and widespread support from the attendees, YVCOG and YHD created a working group with community members to explore complete streets related issues, including walkability, in the City of Yakima. The long term goal of the group



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promoting walkable communities



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is to strengthen policies in Yakima supporting walking, biking, and complete streets. At the same time, YVCOG is working with other Central Washington communities to adopt complete streets ordinances through an Active Communities Environments grant.

Costs and funding

The Yakima County Complete Streets Program has two main funding sources. The first is the Washington State Department of Health Active Community Environments program (WSDOT/WA DOH) which grants the YVCOG \$10,000 for two years. The second is the CDC's Community Transformation Grant.

Implementation time-frame

In 2013, YVCOG was approached by the State to use the Active Community Environments grant to encourage adoption of Complete Streets ordinances in Yakima County. YVCOG had been partnering with YHD through their Community Transformation Grant on work to improve policies and the built environment with the goal of increasing physical activity. With CTG funds, the YHD and the YVCOG put together the Central Washington Complete Streets Workshop in April. The one day workshop was attended by approximately 90 city council members, planners, public health workers, and invested community members from four counties in the area. The workshop focused heavily on how to implement Complete Streets projects and the various benefits of increasing the overall safety and accessibility of streets.

For example, Complete Streets ordinances contribute to downtown and economic revitalization, improve residents' quality of life, and give cities a competitive edge in receiving potential funding for future street projects. Streets designed for through traffic as well as to accommodate walkers and cyclists of all ages attract people to communities, increase property values, spur private

investment, and encourage residents to live more active and healthy lifestyles. Following the workshop, YVCOG and YHD created the Yakima Complete Streets working group, soliciting stakeholders to participate that represented walkers, bicyclists, trails, clean air, transit, special needs, and the City of Yakima. Since August, the group has met together six times with the goal of exploring how the City of Yakima can improve its streets for the benefit of all users.

Community involvement

At this point, YVCOG has focused mainly on educating the local city councils and planners on the public health and economic advantages of walkable communities. However, the Yakima Complete Streets Working Group is putting together a spring event that will aim to raise public awareness and educate Yakima County communities about the benefits of walkability and complete streets. In the past, locals have been wary of walkability projects and the City of Yakima even reversed a rechannelization after backlash in regard to congestion concerns. Consequently, the future success of the Yakima County Complete Streets movements depends largely on the local communities' understanding of the advantages of safe and accessible streets for all users. Smart growth and walkability are not just issues for large, urban environments. The Yakima County complete streets program strives to convince Yakima County municipalities that these issues are also relevant in their rural communities.

Benefits and results

After the Complete Streets Workshop in April, the city of Grandview in Yakima County adopted a Complete Streets ordinance. Additionally, YVCOG senior planner Shawn Conrad is currently working as a part of the Active Community Environments grant to pass Complete Streets ordinances in the cities of Sunnyside, Mabton, and Union Gap. Furthermore, the Yakima Complete Streets working



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group continues to advocate for increased attention to walkability in the City of Yakima and aims to strengthen policies in Yakima supporting walking, biking, and complete streets in the long term. In sum, the YVCOG Complete Streets program has effectively sparked local communities to begin considering and implementing Complete Streets ordinances with the intention to achieve the many walkability-associated benefits.

Project Contacts

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Resources

Central WA Complete Streets Workshop Power Point

