

Licking County

Licking County Develops Active Transportation Plan

A Brighter Future for Pedestrians and Bicyclists in Newark and Heath

Challenge

According to the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 11.8% of households in Licking County are below the federal poverty level, with higher poverty rates in the cities of Newark (20.5%) and Heath (13.3%). Transportation is a significant challenge in the county, especially for residents who live in poverty. Approximately 7% of households in the county are without a vehicle, sixty percent of those are in Newark. In addition, there is currently no fixed-route public transit system and a lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to desired destinations. Barriers to transportation contribute to health disparities and poorer health outcomes for low-income residents in Newark and Heath.

Approach

In 2020, Licking County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) and the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) team participated in two workshops as part of the Action Institute hosted by Toole Design Group. The first workshop consisted of creating base maps, assessing current conditions, mapping proposed networks, and planning community engagement. In-person engagement was more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so online platforms were primarily used. The Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS) website housed information about active transportation, Facebook was used to promote the ATP to the community, and emails were sent to a wide network of local partners. The second workshop focused on analyzing the survey and map data to prioritize projects for the final ATP and plan for implementation. Between the two workshops, an interactive online WikiMap was distributed to the community for feedback. To ensure priority populations were reached, paper surveys were randomly mailed to households in low-income neighborhoods. In total, 150 responses were received. When asked about improving walking, 30% said "adding sidewalk where there are gaps" was a priority, 25% prioritized sidewalk repair and maintenance, and 24% wanted more shared use paths and trails. Similarly, 23% of bicyclists also had a desire for more shared use paths and trails. Another 26% wanted "continuous bike routes" to connect them to their desired destinations.

Results

Survey results were considered in the final ATP, which resulted in 84 proposed projects. The projects included 21.43 miles of sidewalk, 11.82 miles of on-street bikeway, 44.37 miles of shared use path, and 20 spot improvements. A final ATP was completed and approved through a resolution signed by the LCATS Board in November 2020. CHC, the City of Newark, and LCATS plan to work on one of the pedestrian projects from the ATP in 2021.



At A Glance

Having access to infrastructures that support walking and biking can impact how a person gets to everyday destinations. This is especially true for households without a vehicle or access to reliable transportation. An ATP is the first step in ensuring these infrastructures exist and provide mobility options to meet everyone's needs. For residents in Newark and Heath, having options for active transportation is especially important for accessing everyday destinations safely and comfortably. Thanks to a collaborative partnership between Licking County CHC, LCATS, the cities of Newark and Heath, and Hull & Associates, LLC, an Active Transportation Plan was developed to begin prioritizing active transportation for Newark and Heath.



Contact

Carrie McKee

Licking County Health Department

cmckee@lickingcohealth.org

<http://www.lickingcohealth.org>