

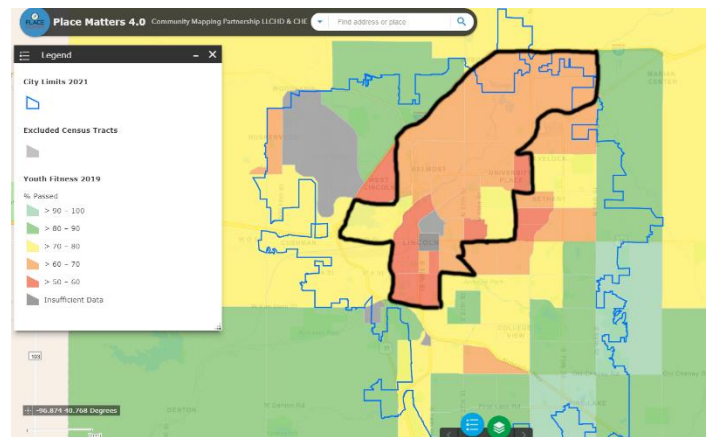
# Outreach Event, Tunnel Project Leads to Lincoln's First Bike Boulevard

## At A Glance

With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant, [Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln](#) (PHL), a non-profit that focuses on improving community health and addressing health disparities, worked with city planners, physical activity advocacy groups, and cultural partners to increase opportunities for physical activity in medically underserved areas by identifying and combining activity friendly routes (pedestrian, bicycle, and transit transportation systems) with everyday destinations (land use and environmental design) and establish education campaigns for pedestrian and bike safety within the medically underserved areas.

## Public Health Challenge

According to America's Health Rankings, 8.3% of deaths of non-disabled adults ages 25 and older were attributed to physical inactivity. Regular physical activity (at least 150 minutes a week) is associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, dementia, and anxiety and depression. Costs associated with physical inactivity account for more than 11% of total health care expenditures and are estimated at \$117 billion annually.



In Lincoln, as few as 50.9% of students in several medically underserved neighborhoods passed the Fitnessgram PACER test according to the Community Mapping Partnership, Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department, and Community Health Endowment Place Matters Maps.

## Approach

According to Safe Route to Parks, there are 5 essential elements of a safe route to a park: Comfort, convenience, safety, access and design, and the park itself. People are more likely to walk to parks if their communities are better connected to parks by active transit routes. Research demonstrates that negative traffic perceptions are associated with decreased walking because people purposefully avoid dangerous traffic areas. People are especially fearful of traffic volume and speed. Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln collaborated with representatives from Lincoln cultural centers the City of Lincoln Planning Department, Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU), and BikeLNK (Lincoln's bike share provider) to provide input and advocacy on several new city policies and plans. Included were the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, Lincoln Parks and Recreation 10 Year Facilities Plans, the Climate Action Plan, and the Lincoln Bike Plan to ensure the voices of underrepresented neighborhoods were heard in these short- and long-term plans to improve and increase opportunities for safe and accessible pedestrian and bike friendly transit.

## Results

In medically underserved neighborhoods, PHL cohosts a one-day outdoor neighborhood health and wellness outreach event called Streets Alive! The festival blocks off about 2 miles of city streets to encourage attendees to walk or bike the whole route. The Streets Alive! Community Development Project (CDP) was created to leave a lasting impact beyond the one-day event to help improve the safety, walkability, and vitality of the host neighborhood. For the South Salt Creek CDP, PHL worked with neighborhood organizations, city services and businesses to repair and refurbish the F Street pedestrian tunnel used by neighborhood families to bypass train tracks to safely access Cooper Park and an adjacent Title 1 middle school.

Lighting in the tunnel was insufficient, the ceiling was peeling and leaking, the mural inside was faded and the landscaping around it was overgrown. All these factors made for an unsafe passage for kids walking to school and residents walking around the neighborhood.

The [F Street Tunnel Project](#) helped to accelerate Lincoln's Parks and Recreation Department improvement plan for that neighborhood park. Improvements through the CDP included new lighting, ceiling repair, a tunnel wall mural (created by a local artist and chosen by the neighborhood), landscaping, drainage, and rebuilding retaining walls. Improvements to the park and the tunnel also helped increase neighborhood pride, spurring several homeowners around the park to improve their residences.



Before

After



The F Street Tunnel Project also played a significant role in the creation of Nebraska's first [Bike Boulevard](#). A bicycle boulevard is one or more residential streets with bicycle street markings and signage that allows bicyclists to ride on the street amongst vehicles and also promotes safe pedestrian traffic. [Studies](#) show bicycle boulevards make it easier for people to engage in physical activity like walking and biking.

Choosing the South Salt Creek neighborhood as the location of the Streets Alive! event and undertaking the tunnel project there prompted city transportation planners to reevaluate the feasibility of an F Street bike boulevard, ultimately moving that street within the South Salt Creek neighborhood to the top of the list. The

implementation of bike boulevards is part of the Lincoln Bike Plan goal to increase bike and pedestrian friendly opportunities in underserved neighborhoods. The new F Street Bicycle Boulevard connects two major trail systems and the refurbished pedestrian tunnel connects to the boulevard on both sides.

"The Salt South Creek neighborhood is excited to be the home of Lincoln's first bicycle boulevard that will join two bike trails and show how cyclists, motorists, and pedestrians can all safely use city streets. It is a great addition to our neighborhood and could not have come at a better time following the improvements to the 'F' Street tunnel," said Justina Clark, President of the South Salt Creek Neighborhood Association.

## Contact

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