

Testimony for Joint Legislative Transportation Vision Task Force

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My name is Jeffrey Brault and I am a member of Walk & Roll Harvey. We are a group of volunteers with the Healthy Harvey Coalition that promotes walking and biking in Harvey County. We work with local governments and citizens to develop biking and pedestrian master plans and we support education for biking and walking safety in our schools and our towns.

The Harvey County Community Health Assessment identified three priorities.¹ All of those priorities – mental health, chronic disease, transportation – are in the focus area of Walk and Roll Harvey. We care about safety and easiness for people who bike and walk because not every person can, or wants, to drive a car. This is a matter of equity – making sure all people have access to services. Without a car, how can you get to your doctors' appointments, to the store, or to work?

The assessment also noted that most people in Harvey County don't get enough exercise and are overweight or obese.² Making sure it is safe and easy for people to walk or bike for fun, for exercise, or for traveling for work or errands can increase the amount of physical activity our residents can get.

Kids learn better in school if they get enough exercise³. The easiest way to get enough exercise is to walk or bike to school but parents are afraid to let their children do that school because of lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes.

Walk & Roll Harvey is one small example of what can be done with support from the state at a local level to address walking and biking. Over the years we got support from Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Governor's Council on Fitness and Kansas Department of Transportation. Currently, North Newton has been awarded Transportation Alternatives Project funding for extending the Sand Creek Trail around the north end of the town; this project will improve the safety of residents by providing an off-road route around town, moving walkers, runners, and bikers off of a busy road and onto a safe multi-use path.

Thanks to assistance from state programs that promote active transportation, we are able to address the chronic disease issues such as the lack of exercise that contributes to heart disease and diabetes.

¹<https://www.harveycounty.com/images/Health%20Department/FINAL%20Community%20Health%20NEEDS%20Assessment%202017%20-.pdf>

² Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2015. <http://www.kdheks.gov/brfss/BRFSS2015/index.html>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK201501/>

We can also make it easier for all people, whether they drive a car or not, to use our streets, paths, and sidewalks in a way that meets their needs.

By continuing to support local communities and groups like Walk & Roll Harvey, the state of Kansas can help us develop and implement projects that support our health and our ability to travel around our communities.