



# Pre-Evaluation Assessments of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Programs and Policies

## Site Visit Summary Report: Nashville MPO

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### Dates of Visit:

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## I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENTS

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### Project Background

As the search for answers to effectively address obesity continues, organizations and communities across the country are experimenting with various strategies aimed at changing people's environments to prevent obesity. Pre-Evaluation Assessments of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Programs and Policies is a project to identify and assess local-level programs and policies that have been implemented with apparent notable success to prevent obesity by improving people's eating habits and physical activity levels. This is a collaborative effort led by a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. ICF Macro, an ICF International Company, serves as the coordinating center for the project.

In each year of the project, nominee initiatives (programs, policies, etc.) will be identified through a systematic search process. Emphasis has been placed on policy or environmental programs being implemented in community settings intended to address obesity. The project also has given priority to programs addressing low-income populations and ethnic groups that experience disproportionate rates of obesity. In each year of the project, a committee will identify themed areas within which to identify programs and policies. In addition, an expert panel will select programs and policies for an evaluability assessment (EA; guided by selection criteria noted in the section below). Following are the two identified themes and the number of selected initiatives for 2011:

1. **Active Transportation Initiatives**—four initiatives
2. **Food Policy Councils**—four policy councils

The overall goal of this project is to identify noteworthy policy or environmental strategies<sup>1</sup> to address obesity using EAs. The interventions selected for EA are the result of a systematic selection process by a panel of experts in the areas of physical activity, nutrition, and evaluation. Selected interventions should not have undergone a rigorous evaluation before. The expert panel selected the sites on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Potential impact**—The initiative appears to have potential for impact on the social or physical environment pertinent to healthy eating and active living.
2. **Reach to target population**—The percentage of the target population that is reached or positively affected in some other way by the initiative.
3. **Acceptability to stakeholders**—The initiative appears to be acceptable and even attractive to pertinent collaborators, gatekeepers, and other necessary groups such as community groups, businesses, government agencies, and so forth.
4. **Feasibility of implementation**—The likelihood that the initiative as designed can be fully implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> This project focuses on environmental strategies and policies to reduce obesity, which are distinguished from didactic programs that focus strictly on changing individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning physical activity and healthy eating. These interventions may focus on environments to increase physical activity or environments to increase access to, and palatability of, less calorie-dense foods.

5. **Feasibility of adoption**—The potential for other similar sites or entities to adopt the initiative, particularly in multiple States or regions.
6. **Transportability or generalizability**—The degree to which the initiative has the potential to be adapted for other settings that differ in size, resources, and demographics.
7. **Initiative sustainability**—The likelihood that the initiative can continue over time without special resources or extraordinary leadership.
8. **Sustainability of health effect**—The likelihood that the intended health effect of the initiative will endure over time.
9. **Staff or organizational capacity**—The sponsoring organization and staff have the capacity to participate fully in an EA, learn from it, and further develop the initiative.

## Definition and Purpose of Evaluability Assessments

Rigorous evaluation and research studies are costly and time consuming. To guide investments in evaluation and research, EAs, or pre-evaluations, can be used to determine whether a rigorous evaluation study is feasible and merited for a particular program or policy. EAs help to avoid premature investment in evaluation studies of programs and policies that have not been adequately implemented and allow evaluation resources to be targeted to studies that are most likely to fill important gaps in the evidence base for obesity prevention.

In the EA process, evaluators work with program or policy administrators and stakeholders to help them get ready for evaluation (Patton, 1997). This involves clarifying goals, clarifying program design by specifying the program or policy model, finding out stakeholders' views on the important issues, and exploring program or policy reality (Wholey, 2004).

For the first year of the project, these EAs took place between May and June 2011. Each EA consisted of a review of program and policy documents followed by an approximately 2½-day site visit where trained site visitors assessed implementation, data collection, and outcomes. As part of the site visit, a limited amount of onsite technical assistance (TA) also was provided to each site, which focused on topics such as the program or policy's logic model and evaluation.

On the basis of the EA findings, the expert panel will identify programs and policies that show promise in addressing the issue of obesity and readiness for rigorous evaluation. Project funds will support one such rigorous evaluation while other studies may be funded by Government or charitable organizations.

The objectives of the EA were to examine the following:

1. The *plausibility* that the initiative will produce the desired outcomes
2. The *feasibility* of fully implementing the initiative
3. The options for further evaluation

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## II. METHODS

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### Document Review

The site visit team reviewed various documents as part of the background review on the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The document review served as a source of background information about the site. Before the visit, the documents helped site visitors to gain a general understanding of the initiative structure. The materials also served as a reference during analysis and report writing to provide clarification or a more comprehensive context for the data collected throughout the EA. The site visit team reviewed the following documents:

1. 2035 Regional Transportation Plan:
  - a. Guiding Principles, Regional Goals, and Major Objectives
  - b. Project Evaluation Factors
  - c. Project Evaluation Criteria
  - d. Urban Surface Transportation Program Investment Strategy
2. Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, A Strategic Vision for Walking and Bicycling in the Greater Nashville Region:
  - a. Executive Summary
  - b. Project Evaluation Methodology

### Site Visit

The site visit to the Nashville MPO took place June 5–8, 2011. Using semistructured interview guides, the site visit team conducted 13 in-person interviews, with a total of 17 people. See Appendix A for a list of the interview guide topics. Before the visit, the ICF Macro coordinating center requested a list of suggested interviewees from the site. Once received, ICF Macro team members talked with the site visitors and the site contact to discuss the roles of those suggested, consider any important persons who may have been missed, and confirm those who would be interviewed. Respondents read an informed consent statement, which emphasized that the purpose of the visit was not to conduct an actual evaluation, but rather to learn about the initiative. The document also stressed that interviewees' responses would be confidential. Table 1 shows the number of interviews by interviewee type.

**Table 1: Interviews Conducted**

Lead Administrator or Manager(s)	Other Staff	Partners	Other Stakeholders	Total
1	3	11	2	17

These interviews were conducted with the following people:

1. Michael Skipper, executive director, Nashville Area MPO
2. Leslie Meehan, senior transportation planner, Nashville Area MPO
3. Felix Castrodad, transit planner, Nashville Area MPO
4. Mary Beth Ikard, communications director, Nashville Area MPO
5. Bob Murphy, president, RPM Transportation; board member, Walk/Bike Nashville
6. Freddie O'Connell, president, board of directors, Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority; board member, Walk/Bike Nashville
7. Jim McAteer, director of planning, Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority
8. Ted Cornelius, executive director, Tennessee Pioneering Healthier Communities Program, YMCA
9. Joan Randall, executive director, Tennessee Obesity Taskforce
10. Bridget Jones, executive director, Cumberland Region Tomorrow
11. Yvonne Joosten, executive director, Office for Community Engagement, Vanderbilt Institute for Medicine and Public Health
12. Joe Bandy, assistant director, Department of Sociology, Peabody College at Vanderbilt
13. Ed Cole, executive director, Transit Alliance
14. Dr. Bill Paul, director, Metro Health Department
15. Jimmy Dills, health impact assessment coordinator, Metro Health Department
16. Karl Dean, mayor of Nashville
17. Adetokunbo Omishakin, director of healthy living initiatives, Office of the Mayor

Nine of the interviews occurred with individual interviewees while the other four occurred with two interviewees at once, as noted above. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 1 hour.

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### **III. IDENTIFIED ELEMENTS OF THE INITIATIVE**

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The review of the initiatives documents and the site visit interviews helped the site visitors to identify various elements of the initiative as planned and as it currently is being implemented.

#### **Initiative as Planned**

##### ***Brief History of the Initiative***

It is the MPO's federally mandated responsibility to maintain an RTP that covers at least a 20-year period. The 2035 Nashville Area RTP was adopted in December 2010. The plan contains three main components: (1) expanding mass transit, (2) improving and expanding active transportation choices and walkable communities, and (3) preserving and enhancing existing roadway corridors.

The guiding principles of the plan are livability, sustainability, prosperity, and diversity. The plan aims to bring a holistic approach to transportation planning that addresses economic development, urban design, housing, land use, water and sewer systems, and food access. The plan covers a seven-county area and was approved by all of the member governments.

##### ***Initiative Components***

##### **2035 Regional Transportation Plan**

The 2035 RTP is a long-range plan, but the MPO also maintains a shorter-term transportation improvement plan (TIP) that contains projects planned for the next 4 to 5 years. The MPO issues requests for proposals for transportation projects and assesses them according to project scoring criteria included in the RTP. One component of the plan is particularly related to physical activity. A criterion for evaluating proposed transportation projects calls for additional points to be allocated to projects that include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, also referred to as complete streets. Proposed projects receive up to 15 of 100 points for including multimodal options. Also, up to 10 points are allocated for proposed projects that are anticipated to improve health and the environment. Up to 15 points can be awarded in the Quality Growth, Sustainable Development, and Economic Prosperity category for improving accessibility and multimodal access to development, plus up to 10 points for Congestion Management, which includes providing nonmotorized capacity and dedicated travel lanes (i.e., infrastructure facilities for bicycles and pedestrians), and finally another 10 points may be awarded for increasing safety which includes improving safety for bicycles and pedestrians. A total of 60 of the 100 points on which roadway projects are scored are based in whole or in part on how well the project provides for the accessibility, mobility, and safety of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks and bike lanes.

##### **Outreach and Education**

Another critical function of the MPO is to educate the public and decision makers about the rationale behind the 2035 RTP, to help them see it as part of a bigger vision for the region, and to describe how it should positively impact their lives. The MPO conducts bicycle safety education for riders, drivers, and law enforcement personnel, and they have created curricula for children and adults. They also worked to ensure the area counties that would be proposing projects understood the criteria in place that address health and multimodal options.

The MPO hired a full-time staff member dedicated to communicating with the public about the RTP via traditional and social media. She maintains the MPO Web site, Facebook account, and Twitter account, and organizes speakers for public events. MPO staff members as a whole have conducted extensive outreach as part of the 2035 RTP development and adoption process. The MPO also provides some education to developers to help them understand the complete streets model.

### **MPO Staff and Decision-Making Body**

The MPO is made up of highly skilled, motivated, and committed staff members who were reported to be very adept at presenting data in a format that is easily understood by different audiences. The executive director leads the MPO and deals with legislative and policy issues. Other MPO staff includes planners (who focus on a variety of specialties including bicycle and pedestrian safety, transit, and freight), analysts, a dedicated staff member for communication, and an office manager. The senior planner who coordinated the site visit is a strong proponent of the link between health and transportation and the built environment within the MPO and in their network of partners.

The MPO decision-making body is the executive board, which is composed of the city and county mayors within the MPO region and is currently chaired by the mayor of Nashville, Karl Dean. Mayor Dean is very involved, and noted that local government can play a role in addressing the obesity epidemic by creating environments where people can be active. There is also a technical coordinating committee, which is composed of city and county planners and engineers, and acts in a technical advisory capacity to the executive board. The MPO executive board members also sit on the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), whose boundaries include the Nashville Area MPO region plus several additional counties. The board meetings are held back-to-back each month to facilitate coordination between the two organizations. There is approximately 90% overlap between the two boards.

### **Working With Partners**

The MPO is committed to working with a wide range of partners to implement its vision, including the following:

- Business organizations such as the chamber of commerce
- Numerous nonprofits and advocacy organizations (including transit and bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations)
- Universities
- Public schools
- Other transportation planning organizations (Metropolitan Transit Authority [MTA], RTA, and other MPOs)
- Nashville Metro Health Department

Through their relationship with nonprofits and advocacy organizations, the MPO is able to influence community and political will in a way they would not have been able to directly. None of the partners interviewed on the site visit identified any burdens in working with the MPO.

## **Data Collection and Use**

The MPO staff noted that not all of the necessary health-related data to support their work (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC Program], Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System [BRFSS]) were available at the county level. In some instances, they used U.S. Census data to supplement the data they collected. The importance of regional data in influencing regional decision makers was noted several times.

The MPO conducted several data collection efforts prior to developing the 2035 RTP to provide an evidence base for the plan. These included a Web-based bicycle-pedestrian study, a random digit dialing (RDD) transportation survey, a Web survey, and analysis of existing sources of data. Over 2,400 people participated in the development of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, which created the region's first vision for walking and bicycling in the MPO area. Over 342 residents from the MPO region participated in two rounds of public meetings held in February and July 2009, and over 1,700 people participated in an online survey about bicycle and pedestrian needs. Respondents noted the importance of input from the public in convincing elected officials to pursue active transportation initiatives. Hundreds of additional people participated in the development of the 2035 RTP.

The MPO is also planning to conduct a regional household travel survey of travel behavior in the region, which MPOs typically study approximately every 10 years. As part of the survey, the MPO will conduct a substudy of 600 (or potentially 1,200 if funding can be secured) individuals, using a global positioning system (GPS) and accelerometers to assess transportation patterns, and they plan to administer BRFSS questions to these respondents as well. This study will allow the MPO to better understand and interpret travel behaviors and transportation trips throughout the region, and the use of accelerometers and GPS units will enable them to provide evidence of whether those using transit and nonmotorized forms of transportation receive more physical activity than those who drive.

The MPO conducts land use, growth, travel, and air quality modeling to inform their decisions. They are seeking to revise existing travel demand models that center on car trips and create models based on the purpose of the trip (i.e., travel to work, grocery store, school) and the mode that could be used for the trips (transit, walking, bicycling, or automobile).

## **Goals and Expected Outcomes**

The goal of the MPO is to improve the quality of life for residents in MPO area communities. In line with that goal, MPO representatives identified a number of outcomes desired from their work. In particular, the following are short-, intermediate- and long-term outcomes the MPO hopes to achieve with the 2035 Nashville Area RTP:

### **Short-Term Outcomes**

- Increased awareness of the connection between health (including health care costs) and the built environment
- Increased coordination between land use and transportation
- Increased number of projects that align with the RTP principles

- MPO investment strategies begin to enable the built environment to change to support active transportation
- Increased public awareness of and support for active transportation systems
- Increased access to active transportation systems
- Increased active transportation choices and preservation of existing roadways

### **Intermediate-Term Outcomes**

- Early implementation of vision for transportation with growth in new multimodal plans (for complete streets projects)
- Increased development of complete streets infrastructure
- Increased number of active, accessible transportation options
- Increased number of people using active transportation modes
- Increased economic benefits for community businesses
- Reduction in automobile accidents/fatalities
- Improvement in air quality
- Partners implementing activities consistent with RTP priorities

### **Long-Term Outcomes**

- Increased livability, prosperity, and sustainability of MPO area communities
- Increased diversity of transportation options
- Improved health (e.g., activity and healthy weight) among MPO area residents

### **Target Audience**

The target audience for the 2035 RTP is all residents of the Nashville region. MPO educational materials note that 40% of all trips in the region are less than 2 miles in length, and having people increase their walking, bicycling, or use of mass transit to take those trips would help in reducing traffic congestion and providing health benefits.

The MPO strives in particular to reach underserved populations, increase equity and reduce health disparities related to transportation plans. The MPO has identified areas where people are least likely to own a car and are dependent on other modes of transportation as being most in need of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Two specific populations respondents identified as dependent on mass transit include persons with disabilities and the elderly.

As part of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, the MPO developed criteria on which to rank bicycle and pedestrian projects such as proposed sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenways. One of the

project scoring areas is the High Health Impact Area, which is made up of census tracts in the MPO region which have higher than average presence of populations who are impoverished, minority, or elderly. Nonmotorized infrastructure are given additional points if they are located in these geographic areas, since these facilities would be providing transportation options for households that may be less likely to own/have access to an automobile and may have higher rates of health disparities and chronic diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and obesity.

### ***Progression of Implementation***

Since the implementation of the 2035 RTP and the MPO's promotion of the change in criteria that now include points for multimodal options, 75% of the projects submitted for the MPO's consideration included bicycle or pedestrian facilities. Almost 70% of the roadway projects in the adopted 2035 RTP include bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities, which is a significant increase from the previous 2030 RTP, which used different scoring criteria and in which an estimated 2% of projects contained bicycle or pedestrian facilities.

The MPO is conducting transit circulation studies of major transportation corridors in the region to further inform development of transit options. At the time of the visit, one such study was examining the feasibility of an urban streetcar or light rail for the Broadway West End area downtown.

### ***Initiative Funding***

The MPO receives Federal, State, and local funding. The MPO's budget for the 20-year RTP is approximately \$6 billion. Some of the MPO's funding streams are population based, and some have to be applied for by the MPO. The RTP dedicates 15% of the MPO's Surface Transportation Program funding for bicycle or pedestrian-related activities (compared with 1% or less of Federal transportation funds spent nationally on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure). The MPO views having dedicated bicycle-pedestrian funds as critical, because funds dedicated to improving air quality—for example—are often the first to be rescinded. In dedicating these funds, they have created a plan that can be resilient to financial hardship. In terms of staffing, the MPO has nine full-time staff members, two part-time staff members, and one intern.

## **Initiative Context**

### ***Organizational Context***

MPOs, including the Nashville MPO, were created in the 1960s spurred by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 promoted a regional approach to planning, headed by elected officials, a model adopted for other planning processes, including transportation (Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, n.d.). Other legislation has shaped the structure and role of MPOs over time. As described above, MPOs are responsible for maintaining long-term plans accompanied by plans for shorter-term transportation investments.

Over time, the planning process evolved to try to address concerns such as traffic congestion and pollution. Concepts such as linking transportation to health outcomes, promoting active transportation options to enhance opportunities for physical activity, and improving access to healthy food options are relatively recent.

## **Community Context**

In 2011, Tennessee was ranked fourth highest in the United States in the percentage of adults who are obese (31.9%), and fifth highest in adult physical inactivity (Trust for America's Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011). The Nashville Area MPO's planning area includes 5 counties and portions of 2 additional counties in Middle Tennessee, covering an estimated 1.7 million people. The following statistics apply to the Nashville-Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which overlaps—but does not align exactly—with the MPO's planning area. The total population of the MSA in 2009 was estimated to be 1,581,908 persons, living in a total of 659,637 housing units. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the population is as follows: 78.9% White, 15.3% African American, 2.2% Asian, 1.5% two or more races, 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native, with 6.0% identifying as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Over 13% of the population lives below the Federal poverty level.

Sprawling development in the area over the last decade has contributed to a decentralized, car-dependent population. The majority of employed adults in the MSA commute to work in a motor vehicle by themselves (82%), and the average commute time is over 25 minutes (U.S. Census Bureau).

To date, community engagement in the RTP has primarily been through participation in data collection, responses to surveys, and attendance at public meetings. Community input was a large part of the data collection process that informed development of the RTP. As noted, hundreds of residents from the MPO region participated in two rounds of public meetings held as part of the development of the plan. In addition, over 1,100 people participated in an RDD survey across the 10-county region, responding to questions about their transportation needs and how they would allocate transportation dollars. This public input is in addition to the over 2,400 people who provided input as part of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study, and hundreds of others who participated in other planning efforts (e.g., the Regional Freight Study, the Northeast and Southwest Corridor Studies, the Tri-County Land Use and Transportation study). This community input helped inform the 2035 plan. Now that the RTP is in place, the MPO continues to collect public comment through community meetings, online survey forms, public speaking engagements, and additional community engagement mechanisms as outlined in the federally required MPO Public Participation Plan. The MPO is considering establishing a group of community members appointed by the mayor to provide ongoing feedback.

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## IV. HIGHLIGHTED FINDINGS

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Information collected through the site visit interviews and review of documents provides some suggestions of the plausibility of the initiative for attaining the desired goals and the feasibility of its full implementation.

### Plausibility

The logic underlying the RTP and its use to guide investments to reduce obesity by improving the walkability and bikeability of Nashville and enhancing transit options is plausible. Particularly plausible are the shorter-term goals, over which the MPO has greater control. For example, their own modeling of land use (and of growth, travel, and air quality), along with partnerships they have developed with regional and local transportation organizations and land use decision makers, can help increase the coordination between land use and transportation.

Intermediate goals also are plausible, though more removed from the direct activities of the MPO. Through the MPO's investments in multimodal projects and the engagement of their partners, it is plausible that they will see growth in complete streets plans and infrastructure. In the future, the MPO may consider requiring local governments to have locally adopted Complete Streets plans in order to apply for funding through the MPO process, and to demonstrate how proposed projects will help to fulfill the Complete Streets plans. On the basis of prior examples of the results of such infrastructure changes, they anticipate outcomes such as an increase in people using active transportation modes, increased economic benefits for community businesses, reduction in automobile accidents and fatalities, improvements in air quality, and their partners implementing activities consistent with the RTP priorities.

Finally, longer-term goals of the MPO—though much more distal—also are plausible. Through the foundation established, it is possible that they will see outcomes in line with their four guiding principles. These include goals of increased livability, prosperity, and sustainability of MPO area communities, and increased diversity of transportation options. It is also plausible to anticipate improved health (e.g., physical activity and healthy weight) among MPO area residents, and the long-term impact they articulate as “improved quality of life” for residents in the Nashville MPO area.

MPO staff agreed on general goals of the RTP. These are represented in the logic model the site visitors developed onsite and reviewed with the executive director and senior planner. Other stakeholders not present for the logic model discussion also relayed a high degree of consensus regarding the mechanisms by which the RTP will influence the region and achieve its intended goals. See Appendix C for the final agreed-upon logic model.

### Feasibility

The 2035 RTP has only been in place since December 2010, but on the basis of the site visit, it seems feasible that the 2035 RTP will be fully implemented. Investments in transportation in the MPO area will be guided by the RTP, which emphasizes active transportation and walkability/bikeability. All of the stakeholders are committed to the direction laid out in the RTP, and the MPO has the authority to carry out the RTP.

The MPO staff and their partners, along with funding from the streams referenced above, will allow for the RTP to guide transportation investments in the region. The MPO recognizes that transportation funding spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities may not be the highest type of project priority, and that funding may be spent on improvements for motor vehicles before funding is spending on facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. As a result, MPO staff members have taken steps to ensure that the funding for the bicycle and pedestrian components of the plan will have dedicated funding—15% of the total Surface Transportation Project (STP) dollars funding the plan. This percentage of the STP funds will be eligible for application by local governments to receive funds for activities such as building bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and providing increased opportunities for education and safety training around bicycle and pedestrian modes. This 15% is separate from the bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are funded as part of projects scored on the roadway project scoring criteria, in which 60% of the criteria support investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The 15% is intended to address additional infrastructure needs not already included in the plan as part of a roadway project, and to address the need to provide education and awareness around bicycle and pedestrian travel to children, the general public, and law enforcement.

The MPO has overcome potential barriers to adopting the 2035 RTP, primarily related to conventional thinking about transportation and traditional methods of alleviating congestion that do not increase active transportation. Getting decision makers to think regionally rather than locally has also been challenging, but the formation of the Mayor's Caucus has helped to build a regional focus. Some resistance has also been encountered from public works and engineers that are accustomed to building roads without considering bicycles and pedestrians. Challenges related to the state of the economy were also discussed, particularly around having to work harder for funding.

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## V. EVALUATION POTENTIAL

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### Evaluation Capacity Building

No formal evaluation currently is being conducted of the impact of the 2035 RTP, but a range of studies are being conducted, and the MPO staff have a high capacity for conceptualizing, collecting, analyzing, and making use of data.

One such data collection is the addition to a planned regularly conducted study. Every 10 years, MPOs typically conduct a household travel study that explores where people travel, what mode of transportation they use to get there, and the purpose of their trips, as well as demographic data. The MPO is integrating additional components into this next household travel study to better inform their efforts. These additional components include a subsample of the respondents using GPS units and accelerometers to gauge their levels of physical activity. Further, by comparing moderate-to-vigorous physical activity levels across transportation modes (i.e., walking, bicycling, using mass transit, driving), they may help grow the evidence base for the link between active transportation and health.

In addition to this potential source of data, the MPO has a range of existing data at its disposal. A variety of baseline data were collected and collated for the development of the 2035 RTP that also would be useful for an evaluation. The MPO collects data related to traffic patterns, transit ridership, miles of bicycle facilities and sidewalks, and freight patterns. The MPO also conducted a bicycle and pedestrian study in 2009 using a Web survey and an RDD survey about transportation in 2010. Additional existing data sources that could be used for an evaluation include feasibility study data, project applications and evaluations, air quality data, road-related data (such as accident and congestion data) and data related to communication efforts.

The MPO also is interested in collecting data to document changes in quality of life, including health status and air quality. Of particular interest is the degree to which the MPO's efforts are helping to solve congestion in proximity to underserved populations.

The MPO staff members and partners seem very receptive to and enthusiastic about the idea of rigorous evaluation. They have discussed the possibility of an evaluation from an environmental justice perspective with some local universities. MPO staff members are well versed in a variety of research methods, and are conducting multiple studies at the present time. Some support for data collection activities may be necessary, but the MPO staff members have the capacity to work closely with an evaluation team to conceptualize a rigorous evaluation and to work closely with evaluation staff to carry out an evaluation.

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## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

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A primary strength of the MPO is in its ability to influence environmental changes at a macro level to impact the health and overall quality of life in the region. As a result of the commitment and the dedication of its staff—who are skilled not only in transportation planning but also community outreach and advocacy—they are able to garner support for their bold efforts.

The MPO is working successfully with a variety of partners to influence the development of active transportation in the Nashville region. Possible partners include health systems, nonprofits working with homeless populations, freight carriers and other private sector organizations, key minority organization representatives, the faith community, and the local disability coalition. Through the involvement of such additional partners, the MPO will be even better positioned to reach its target audience of underserved populations and increase health equity in the region.

The MPO has an excellent opportunity to build on its ongoing data collection efforts to further build the evidence base for the link between transportation and health. Any occasion public health and other funders can take to partner with the MPO in pursuing evaluation activities along these lines is likely to prove very fruitful.

■ **Suggestion:**

- The MPO staff should contact Charlie Foster for additional technology available for mapping infrastructure. His e-mail address is [charlie.foster@dph.ox.ac.uk](mailto:charlie.foster@dph.ox.ac.uk).

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## **VII. CONCLUSION**

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The Nashville MPO staff members—in particular its key leadership—are visionaries and leaders in the area of active transportation. The MPO as an organization seems to hold great promise for influencing the direction of transportation infrastructure development. The commitment of the staff and the city government appear to have been critical to the adoption of this ambitious plan. A rigorous evaluation can be conceptualized for this intervention, and it would facilitate other MPOs learning from Nashville’s example and help develop the evidence base for similar efforts across the country.

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## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE TOPICS

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SYSTEMATIC SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT OF NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND OBESITY PROGRAMS AND POLICIES
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The interview guide is separated by interviewee roles: lead administrator, evaluator, other staff, stakeholder, and partner.

During the site visits, we hope to learn more about your initiative. Some of the topics that we would like to discuss with the identified interviewees include the following:

### Lead Administrators

- Background and history of the initiative
- Description of the initiative (structure, goals, expected outcomes, activities, and services)
- Staffing, training, roles, and responsibilities
- Administrator's role and responsibilities
- Challenges and successes with implementation
- Community awareness and involvement
- Initiative's reach to target audience
- Current or potential partnerships
- Strengths and weaknesses of the initiative
- Success(es) of the initiative
- Key lessons learned with overall experience
- Data collection activities
- Financial resources and funding challenges
- Start-up costs, ratio of costs across initiative components, cost of administration

### Evaluators

- Evaluator's role and responsibilities
- Initiative's goals, expected outcomes, activities, and services
- Initiative's reach to target audience
- Community awareness, involvement, and reaction
- Other potential partners
- Success(es) of the initiative
- Evaluation design
- Data collection methods

- Analysis of data and dissemination of results
- Key lessons learned from experience with the initiative and efforts with evaluation
- Financial resources and funding challenges

### **Other Staff**

- Staff member's role and responsibilities
- Initiative's goals, expected outcomes, activities, and services
- Community awareness and involvement
- Current or potential partnerships
- Strengths and weaknesses of the initiative
- Successes of the initiative
- Key lessons learned with overall experience
- Data collection activities
- Financial resources and funding challenges

### **Stakeholders**

- Background and history of the initiative
- Initiative's goals, activities, and services
- Stakeholder's role and involvement with the initiative
- Initiative's reach to target audience
- Audience's awareness and reaction
- General impression of the initiative
- Success(es) of the initiative
- Key lessons learned from experience with the initiative

### **Partners**

- Partner's involvement, role, and responsibilities
- Initiative's goals, expected outcomes, activities, and services
- Community awareness, involvement, and reaction
- Benefits from partnership
- Other potential partners
- Strengths and weaknesses of the initiative
- Success(es) of the program
- Key lessons learned from experience with the initiative
- Funding sources and their effect on partnership

# APPENDIX B. NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION LOGIC MODEL

**Contextual Factors:** Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the target population, rural and urban geography and transportation needs, participating organizations' policies and practices, and transportation system practice trends and policies

