

Youth Engagement Strategies (YES) Workshop

Why is Youth Engagement Important?

1. Including the Youth Voice Brings A Different Perspective



Parks and recreation agencies, community & transportation planners, and public health & safety practitioners are experts at designing and implementing well-connected active transportation systems, developing policies and plans, and creating campaigns and programs to encourage healthy eating and active living. So why aren't more youth and teens choosing active travel to get to their destinations – school, work & play? The youth voice is often overlooked in planning for active transportation and recreation, yet we know that planning active travel routes to accommodate children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities allows for the most equitable and accessible transportation system.

Children perceive and use their community differently than adults, and can often contribute low cost, viable solutions to community travel challenges. The youth perspective has the potential to positively inform how we plan and improve access to schools, parks and recreation facilities, and active travel systems. While communities across the country are beginning to develop partnerships to address this gap in service, collaborators don't fully understand how to include the youth perspective.

2. Perception of Safety Can be a Primary Obstacle for Youth In Choosing Active Transportation

Research clearly shows the positive impact of the built environment on an individual's choice for active transportation. Including youth in the planning process can bring forward undiscovered community safety issues and creative solutions to enhance traditional planning approaches for siting, design, and maintenance of schools, parks and recreation amenities, and bicycle and pedestrian transportation routes. Community leaders have much to learn about youth perceptions of safety from both the built environment and personal safety viewpoints. Youth can share valuable insights regarding social pathways, preferred travel routes, and interest in various travel modes for safe, active transportation.



3. A Holistic Approach to Community Connectivity Maximizes Resources

The positive health impacts of a built environment designed for active transportation have been well documented. However, designing intentionally for connectivity using human-powered travel to important community destinations is often overlooked by public health practitioners, transportation designers, recreation and park professionals, and community planners.

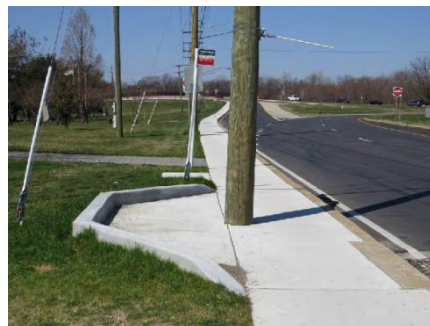
Why? One theory - with the overwhelming number of assessment tools, impact measurement systems, research initiatives, programs, and design strategies, architects of change have become specialists, focusing on implementing the latest tools and measurements designed by researchers for their particular niche. We have been creating pockets of brilliant, though disconnected, advancements in this nascent movement known as 'active transportation'. Designing for active transportation and recreation is not only a smart investment, but also in community health, environmental sustainability, and economic viability.

GP RED Youth Engagement Strategies Workshop

Youth Engagement Strategies for Active Transportation & Recreation combines the use of innovative engagement tools (PhotoVoice, Umap, and Youth Activity & Nutrition Survey) and a community visioning and action planning process. This training uses an interactive model to demonstrate the purpose, techniques, and outcomes of each tool, with a field component for participants to directly engage in practicing PhotoVoice and Umap. The community visioning and action planning components are integrated with the introduction of the youth engagement tools. Staff training manuals for PhotoVoice and Umap are provided.

PhotoVoice

PhotoVoice was developed in China as a strategy to demonstrate working conditions of women in rural agricultural settings. PhotoVoice is an interactive tool that uses pictures to engage youth and elected officials in a dialogue about their perceptions of community issues, assets, and challenges. PhotoVoice projects are conducted over several weeks using disposable or digital cameras, facilitated dialogue, photo captioning to describe how the selected image relates to youth perceptions of their active travel environments. The training includes hands on field experience taking pictures, engaging in facilitated group discussion, and a captioning exercise, as well as protocols for youth safety in conducting a PhotoVoice project. Participants will learn creative strategies for sharing the PhotoVoice project with community leaders, advocates, and policy makers.



Umap



Umap the Community was developed by Dr. Pamela Wridt of the Children's Environments Research Group at the City University of New York. Umap is an online technique using Google Maps as well as aerial mapping to enhance community awareness and decision-making, targeted infrastructure improvement, and policy development. The Umap component of the training involves both individual and collective identification of opportunities and barriers to active travel in a specific neighborhood, community, or region through a series of questions related to active travel and perception of safety.

Youth Activity & Nutrition Survey

Adapted from the Youth Activity and Nutrition Survey (YANS) developed for GP RED's Healthy Communities Research Group (HCRG) by Dr. Deb Jordan of East Carolina University, the Youth Activity & Nutrition Survey asks targeted questions about the nutrition, physical activity, and transportation choices young people make and why. This component of the workshop will involve learning how to design survey questions, methodologies for data collection (web, mail in, phone), and effective strategies for summarizing and communication results.

GP RED Youth Engagement Strategies Training Learning Outcomes

- a. Understand the opportunities for incorporating the youth perspective in community planning for active transportation.
- b. Define youth engagement strategies of Photovoice and Umap for involving youth in identifying community safety issues and obstacles to active transportation to parks and recreation facilities.
- c. Discuss successful methods for communicating the youth perspective to community policy makers and funders through various art forms and presentation strategies.
- d. Explore methodologies for designing, conducting, analyzing, and reporting youth surveys.
- e. Participate in a community visioning and action planning process for active transportation.

Instructors:



Cindy Heath, CPRP is the Executive Director for GP RED, a national non-profit organization providing research and education for parks, recreation & land management agencies. Prior to joining GP RED, she served for over thirty years in public parks and recreation administration, professional association leadership, community planning, and citizen engagement.

Cindy is a member of the National Complete Streets Coalition Speaker's Bureau and was a fellow at the Center for Whole Communities Whole Thinking Retreat and the Robert Wood Johnson Active Living by Design Community Partnership for the Upper Valley NH/VT Trails for Life initiative. She serves as a reviewer for the League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Communities Program, and is a Trails and Pathways specialist for GreenPlay, LLC, a national parks and recreation consulting firm. Cindy is the creator of GP RED's Safe Routes To Play© initiative, which helps communities develop safe, non-motorized connections for children and families between play spaces, schools, community destinations and neighborhoods.



Pamela Wridt, PhD created the Umap approach based on over 15 years of research on community mapping with children, youth, and adults with the goal of improving their participation in community planning processes. Pamela is the Co-Director of the Children's Environments Research Group at the City University of New York Graduate Center, and she served as a Senior Instructor in the Department of Urban Planning & Design at the University of Colorado from 2005-2010.

Pamela has directed or participated in research in emergency contexts in Haiti, Bangladesh, the United States, and Angola, and has managed global projects in over a dozen other countries with the most disadvantaged children. Her latest project, [Child Friendly Places](#), is an approach for an intergenerational, participatory assessment and planning methodology that empowers children, parents, and service providers to improve the conditions of their schools and communities in 15 countries and more than 60,000 participants.

For more information, or to book a YES workshop in your region, contact us at info@gpred.org, or 303-439-8369.