Safer Land Use: Connecting Housing, Transportation, and Public Health Outcomes

WSPHA/WSEHA 2026 Joint Conference

Something to think about…

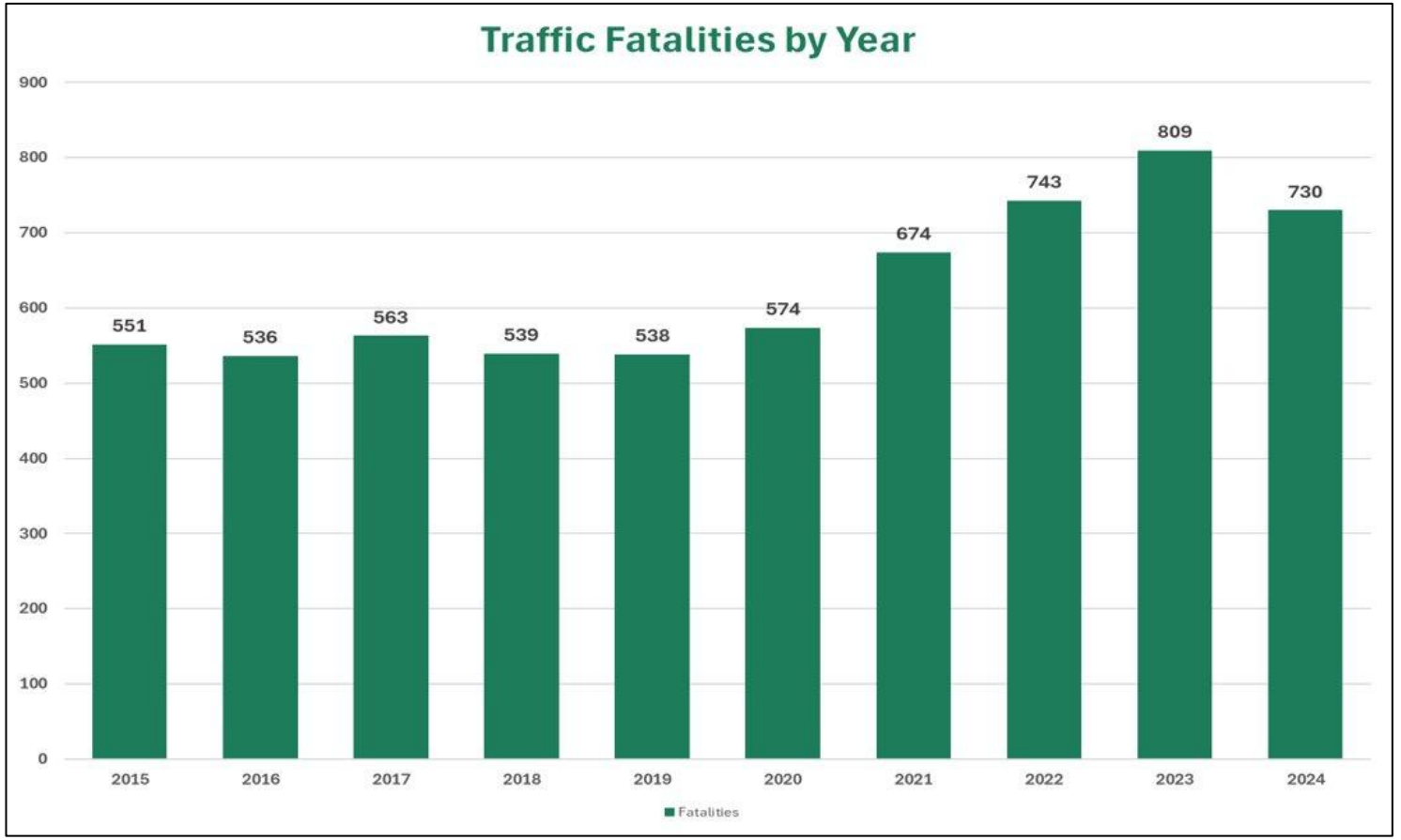
How do the places we live, the way we travel, and our access to everyday destinations influence our health and safety?



Image: Blue Zones Life Radius framework. From *Life Radius approach*, by Blue Zones. Copyright 2019 by Blue Zones, LLC.

Presentation Overview

- Why this matters?
- What is Safer Land Use?
- What does this look like locally?
- Where do we go from here?



Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission

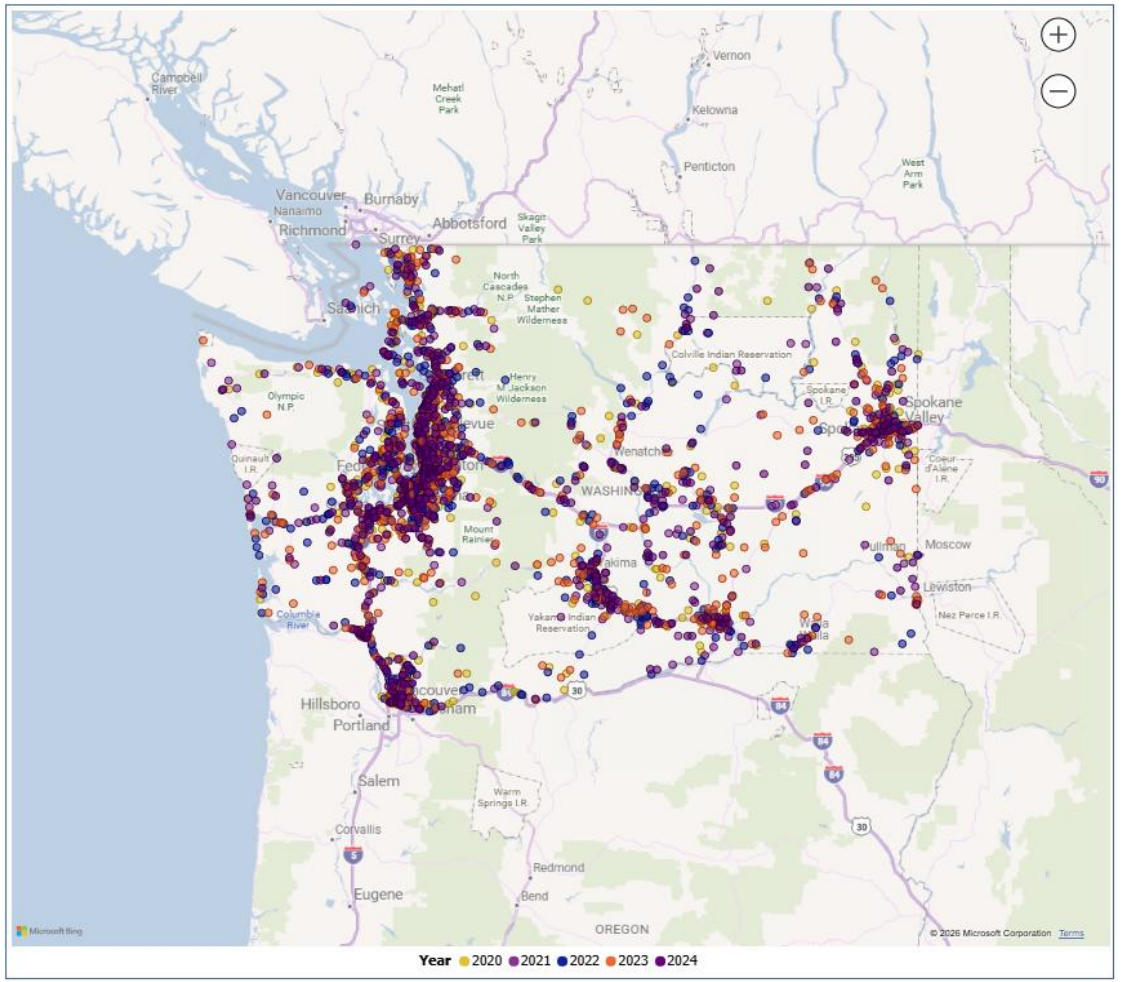
Looking beyond the roadway.

Traffic safety is a growing concern. Speeding, driver behavior, and other factors contribute to serious injuries and fatalities across many communities.

Historic approach focused on roadway design and driver behavior, with less attention to land use and exposure to risk.

WSDOT is expanding approach by connecting land use with community health and public safety outcomes.

Fatal Crashes 2020-2024



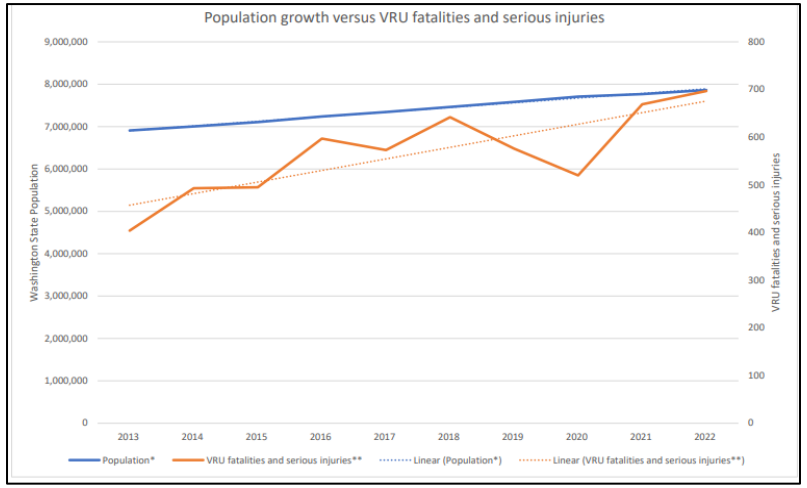
Source: Washington Traffic Safety Commission

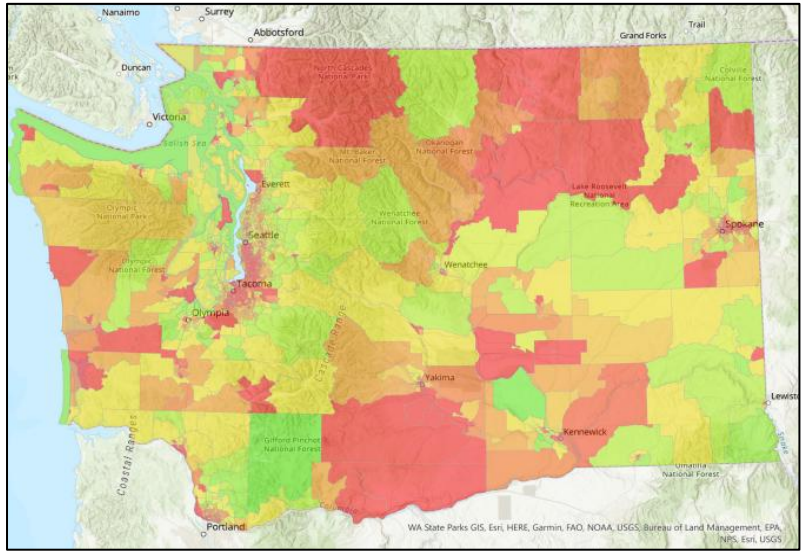
Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment

Key Findings:

- 84% of fatal/serious injury crashes involving vulnerable road users on state highways occurred in urban areas.
  - 79% within 1 mile of schools
  - 87% within 1 mile of transit stops

- Communities experiencing greater social vulnerability, persistent poverty, and environmental health disparities were associated with higher densities of vulnerable road user crashes.





Source: 2023 WSDOT Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment

Transportation safety outcomes begin upstream

The conditions we experience on the transportation system are shaped by decisions made long before a trip begins.



Safer Land Use provides a lens for evaluating how policies, regulations, review processes, and investment decisions translate into desired transportation safety outcomes.

Why land use matters for WSDOT

Transportation safety outcomes are influenced by more than roadway design or behavior.

WSDOT:

- Owns, operates, and maintains public facilities and assets
- Funds, plans, and designs transportation projects
- Reviews plans and development proposals affecting state facilities
- Coordinates with local agencies and regional partners

Safe System Approach

- Safety is proactive
- Strengthen all parts of the system to reduce exposure, likelihood and severity of crashes
- A shared responsibility exists between those who design, build, operate and use the roads and vehicles.



Safer Land Use through a Safe System Lens

Exposure

- How many trips are generated by surrounding land use patterns?
- How far do people need to travel to reach everyday destinations?
- **Are local trips pushed to higher speed arterials due to limited connectivity or separation of uses?**

Likelihood

- Where do driveways, intersections, and access points create potential conflicts?
- Does the street and site design provide clear and connected routes for users?
- **Are there opportunities to reduce conflicts through access management, connectivity, or multimodal facilities?**

Severity

- Where are lower target speeds needed based on surrounding land use contexts?
- Where is greater separation between modes needed?
- **Where are additional separation or protective treatments needed for vulnerable road users?**

What is Safer Land Use

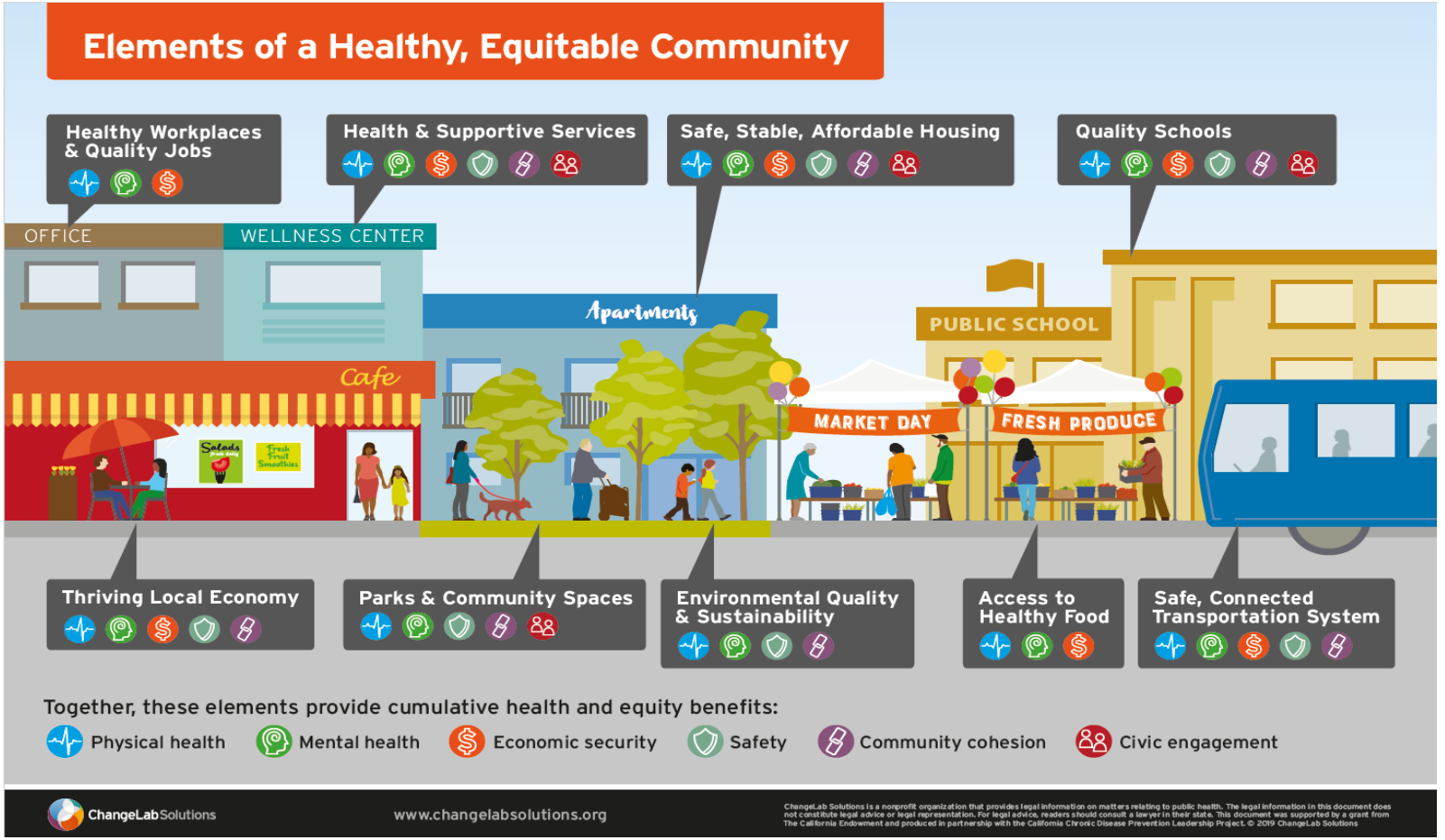
Provides a lens for understanding how growth policies, standards, review processes, and investment decisions shape transportation safety outcomes.

Where things are located	How places are connected	Alignment with with transportation/access
• Housing • Jobs • Schools • Food • Healthcare • Parks	• Street Networks • Crossings • Multimodal Access • Public Transportation	• Roadway Context • Driveways • Speeds • Frontage • Site Design

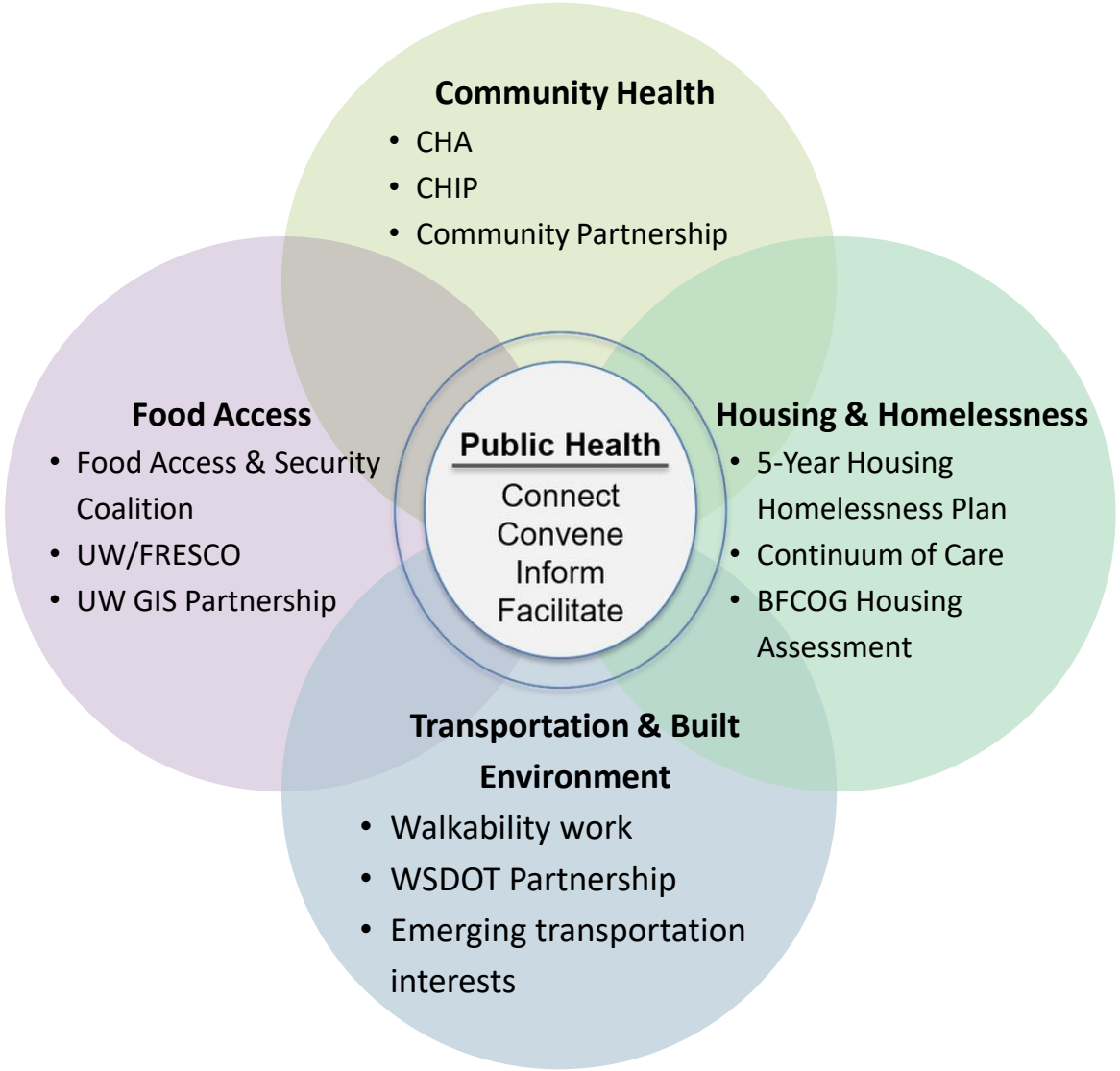
Goal → Reduce Exposure → Prevent Conflicts → Minimize Crash Severity

(Safer) Land Use: What's the connection to Public Health?

- Injury prevention
- Access to
  - Transportation
  - Physical activity
  - Education
  - Jobs
- Economic vitality
- Healthy food
- Housing stability



Health Starts Before the Trip Begins





Walkability and Mobility

BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

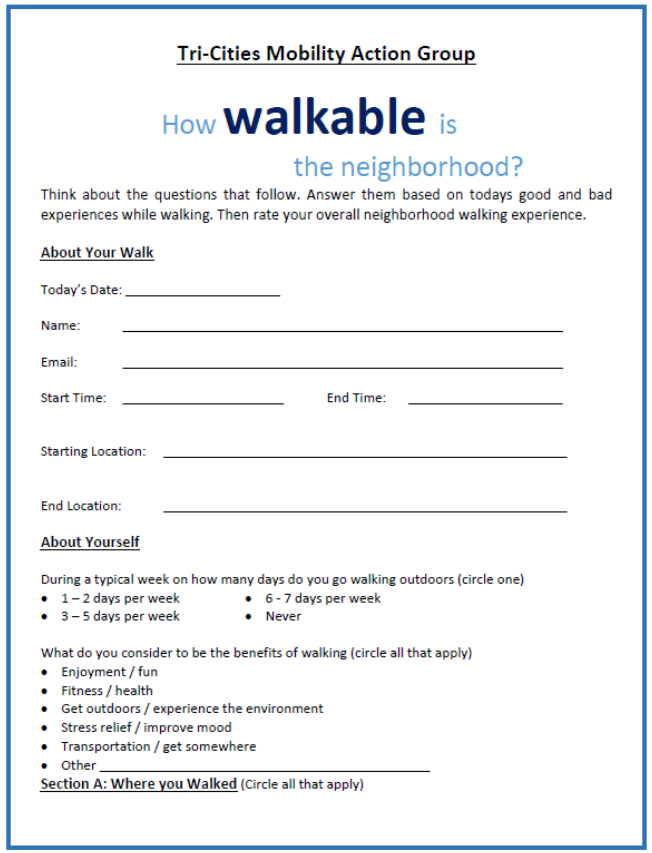
City of Pasco Washington

BFHD Benton-Franklin Health District

ALTC Aging & Long Term Care
Southeast Washington ALTC Council of Governments

Transit BEN FRANKLIN TRANSIT

Walkability and Mobility



Tri-Cities Mobility Action Group

How **walkable** is the neighborhood?

Think about the questions that follow. Answer them based on todays good and bad experiences while walking. Then rate your overall neighborhood walking experience.

About Your Walk

Today's Date: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Starting Location: _____

End Location: _____

About Yourself

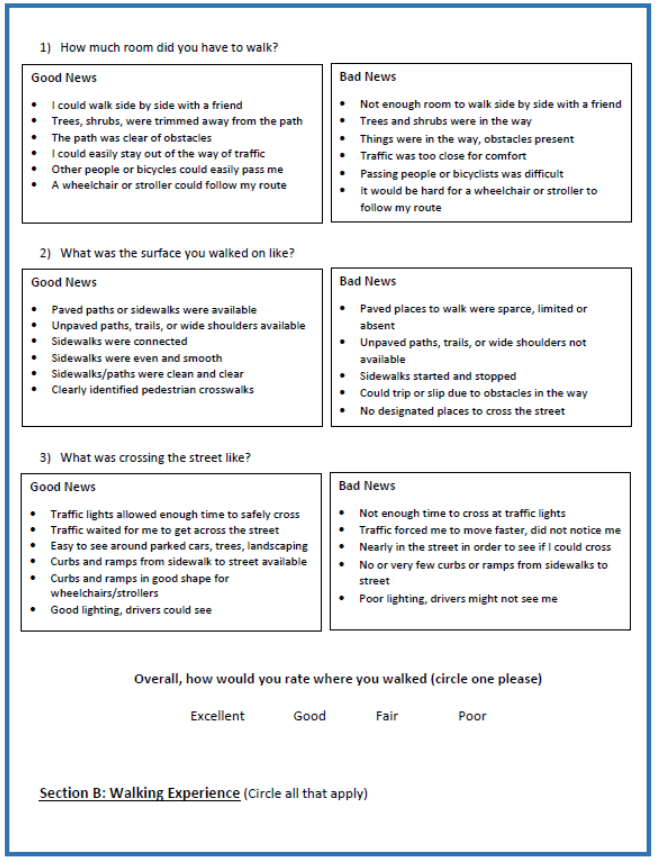
During a typical week on how many days do you go walking outdoors (circle one)

- 1 – 2 days per week
- 3 – 5 days per week
- 6 - 7 days per week
- Never

What do you consider to be the benefits of walking (circle all that apply)

- Enjoyment / fun
- Fitness / health
- Get outdoors / experience the environment
- Stress relief / improve mood
- Transportation / get somewhere
- Other _____

Section A: Where you Walked (Circle all that apply)



1) How much room did you have to walk?

Good News	Bad News
• I could walk side by side with a friend • Trees, shrubs, were trimmed away from the path • The path was clear of obstacles • I could easily stay out of the way of traffic • Other people or bicycles could easily pass me • A wheelchair or stroller could follow my route	• Not enough room to walk side by side with a friend • Trees and shrubs were in the way • Things were in the way, obstacles present • Traffic was too close for comfort • Passing people or bicyclists was difficult • It would be hard for a wheelchair or stroller to follow my route

2) What was the surface you walked on like?

Good News	Bad News
• Paved paths or sidewalks were available • Unpaved paths, trails, or wide shoulders available • Sidewalks were connected • Sidewalks were even and smooth • Sidewalks/paths were clean and clear • Clearly identified pedestrian crosswalks	• Paved places to walk were sparce, limited or absent • Unpaved paths, trails, or wide shoulders not available • Sidewalks started and stopped • Could trip or slip due to obstacles in the way • No designated places to cross the street

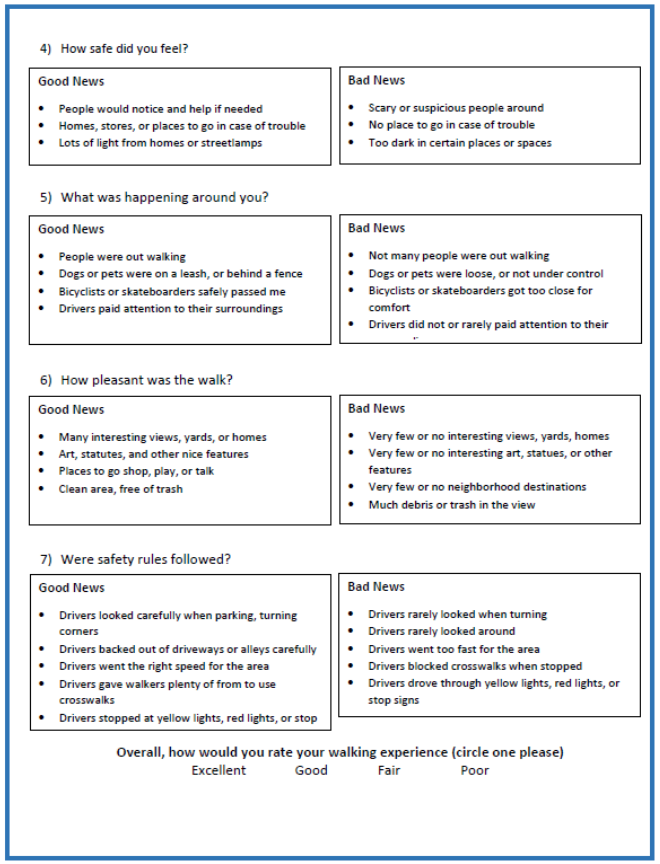
3) What was crossing the street like?

Good News	Bad News
• Traffic lights allowed enough time to safely cross • Traffic waited for me to get across the street • Easy to see around parked cars, trees, landscaping • Curbs and ramps from sidewalk to street available • Curbs and ramps in good shape for wheelchairs/strollers • Good lighting, drivers could see	• Not enough time to cross at traffic lights • Traffic forced me to move faster, did not notice me • Nearly in the street in order to see if I could cross • No or very few curbs or ramps from sidewalks to street • Poor lighting, drivers might not see me

Overall, how would you rate where you walked (circle one please)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

Section B: Walking Experience (Circle all that apply)



4) How safe did you feel?

Good News	Bad News
• People would notice and help if needed • Homes, stores, or places to go in case of trouble • Lots of light from homes or streetlamps	• Scary or suspicious people around • No place to go in case of trouble • Too dark in certain places or spaces

5) What was happening around you?

Good News	Bad News
• People were out walking • Dogs or pets were on a leash, or behind a fence • Bicyclists or skateboarders safely passed me • Drivers paid attention to their surroundings	• Not many people were out walking • Dogs or pets were loose, or not under control • Bicyclists or skateboarders got too close for comfort • Drivers did not or rarely paid attention to their

6) How pleasant was the walk?

Good News	Bad News
• Many interesting views, yards, or homes • Art, statutes, and other nice features • Places to go shop, play, or talk • Clean area, free of trash	• Very few or no interesting views, yards, homes • Very few or no interesting art, statues, or other features • Very few or no neighborhood destinations • Much debris or trash in the view

7) Were safety rules followed?

Good News	Bad News
• Drivers looked carefully when parking, turning corners • Drivers backed out of driveways or alleys carefully • Drivers went the right speed for the area • Drivers gave walkers plenty of from to use crosswalks • Drivers stopped at yellow lights, red lights, or stop	• Drivers rarely looked when turning • Drivers rarely looked around • Drivers went too fast for the area • Drivers blocked crosswalks when stopped • Drivers drove through yellow lights, red lights, or stop signs

Overall, how would you rate your walking experience (circle one please)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

Walkability and Mobility





Walkability and Mobility



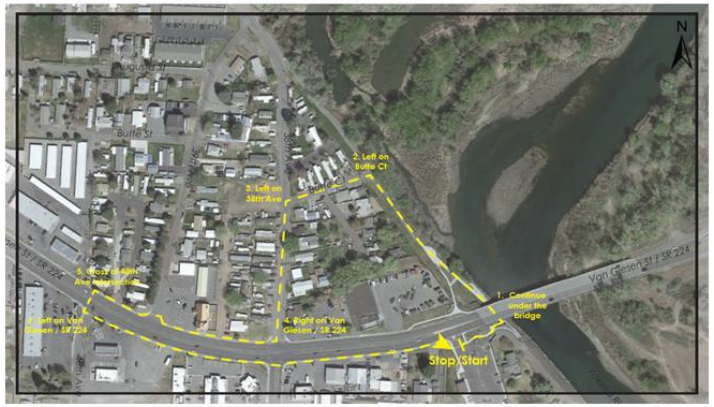


Walkability and Mobility

Introduction

Purpose:
One of the major focuses of the Tri-City Mobility Action Group (TCMAG) is to improve the safety of streets for community members. By conducting research on the street level, TCMAG gains a new perspective on how residents experience their neighborhoods. To ensure that walking, biking, and mobility impaired have safe, accessible, and convenient ways to travel, a walk audit is a useful tool that can inform local city officials on recommendations for infrastructure improvements.

Route Summary:
The approximate 0.75 miles walk began and ended at the west parking lot of the Yakima River Gateway, a waterfront park and trail at the entrance of the City of West Richland. The beginning of the walk followed the new riverfront development along the river for about 0.16 miles (1.). A left was taken on Butte Court and then onto 38th Avenue, where a residential neighborhood resided (2./3.). After 38th Avenue, the walk turned onto State Route 224/Van Giesen Street, for about 0.12 miles (4.). The walk then crossed the street at a light and audio-triggered crosswalk at 40th Avenue (5.). After crossing State Route 224/Van Giesen street, participants traveled east for about 0.27 miles toward the west parking lot of the Yakima River Gateway (6.).



Next Steps

Recommendations for the City of West Richland:

The goal of the walk audit is to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections in the West Richland area and encourage pedestrian use by improving overall safety, pedestrian amenities, and image.

Currently, the Van Giesen area is automobile-centric and mainly accommodates pedestrians at the riverfront development area. With a more defined pedestrian area on Van Giesen, the neighborhood could be transformed into a pedestrian and transit-oriented community.

Careful planning of sidewalks and walkways is important for neighborhoods or commercial districts to provide adequate safety and mobility. Efforts should be focused on the development of Van Giesen and 38th Avenue to be more walkable.

Wider sidewalks and a sidewalk buffer should be constructed between pedestrians and vehicles on Van Giesen. Creating a safe zone for pedestrian travel may reduce the size of the street or require a median crossing area as a pedestrian refuge while crossing the road.

A buffer zone can provide shade, tree structures, visually appealing art, additional transit bus stops, lighting, and other public amenities such as benches, recycling bins, or garbage cans.

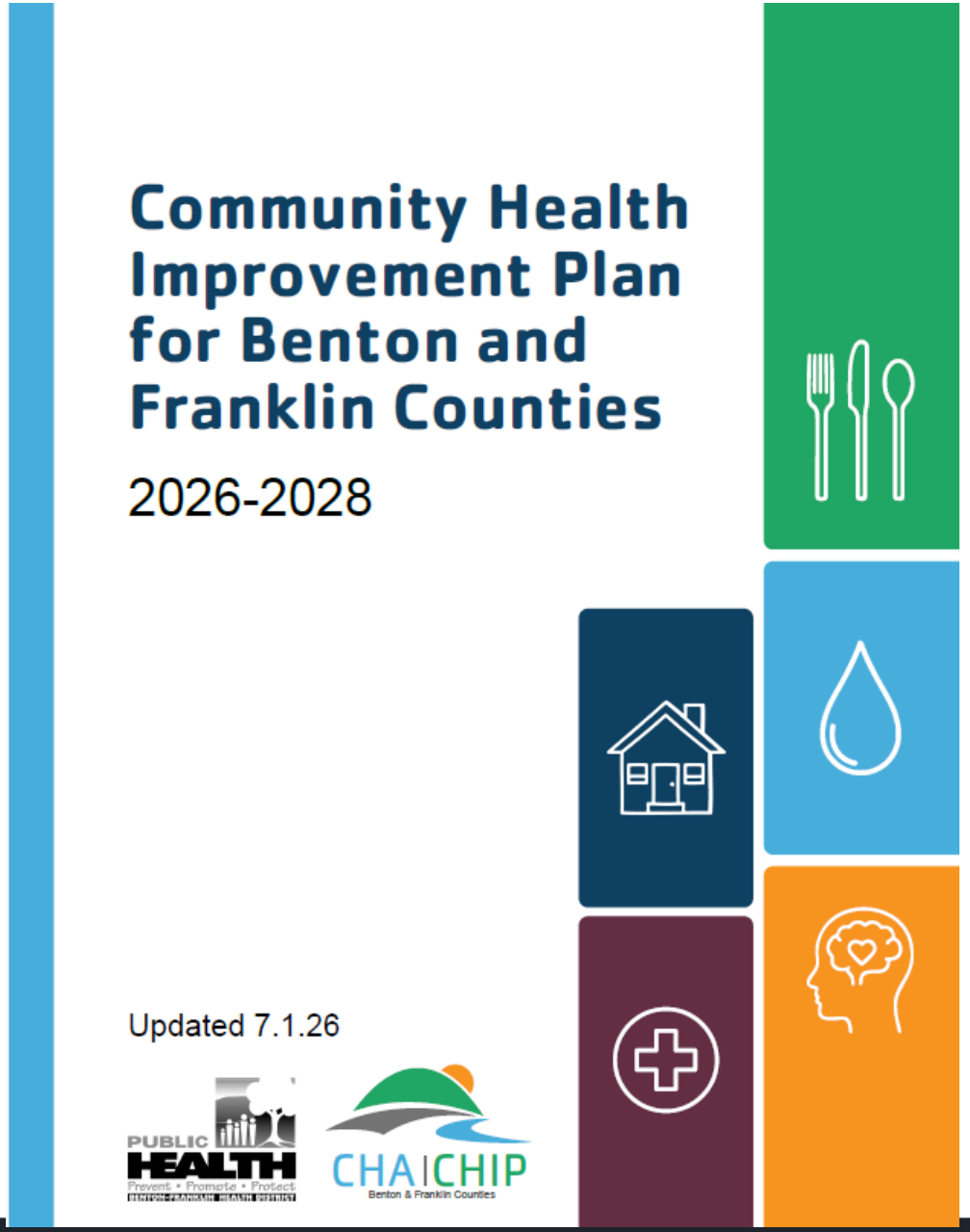
Additionally, construction efforts should also be focused on the development of sidewalks on 38th Avenue to allow residents to be safe and have ease of travel throughout West Richland. Creating this space can incentivize residents of the community to walk to neighborhood amenities instead of driving. A sidewalk or pathway that connects to the riverfront development can also provide opportunities for residents to enjoy the Yakima River and their neighborhood to the fullest.



Regional Collaboration



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Community Health Improvement Plan for Benton and Franklin Counties
2026-2028
Updated 7.1.26
PUBLIC HEALTH
Prevent • Promote • Protect
CHA|CHIP
Benton & Franklin Counties

Community Health Improvement Plan for Benton and Franklin Counties

Goal 1: Reduce food insecurity by addressing barriers to getting food to people experiencing the greatest need, like transportation and enough volunteers to distribute food.

Updated 7.1.26



Community Health Improvement Plan

Goal 1: Ensure effective systems among Continuum of Care (CoC) partners for monitoring and implementing the Benton County Local Homelessness Plan 2025-2029.

Partners: Continuum of Care and member agencies

Objectives:

1. The CoC will implement activities in the Benton County Local Homelessness Plan 2025-2029 where the CoC is designated as the lead.

Updated 7.1.26

Housing & Homelessness: Connecting Planning, Access, and Health

BFHD's Involvement

2025-2030 Benton County Homeless Housing Plan

- Participated on the planning committee
- Participating in the implementation committee

Continuum of Care (CoC)

- Support collaborative efforts and participate in committees.

Benton Franklin Council of Governments

- Provide local public health context, feedback, and support as the assessment is developed.

Connections to Safer Land Use

- Where housing is located
- Transportation options and connections
- Access to services and daily needs
- Accessibility and mobility needs

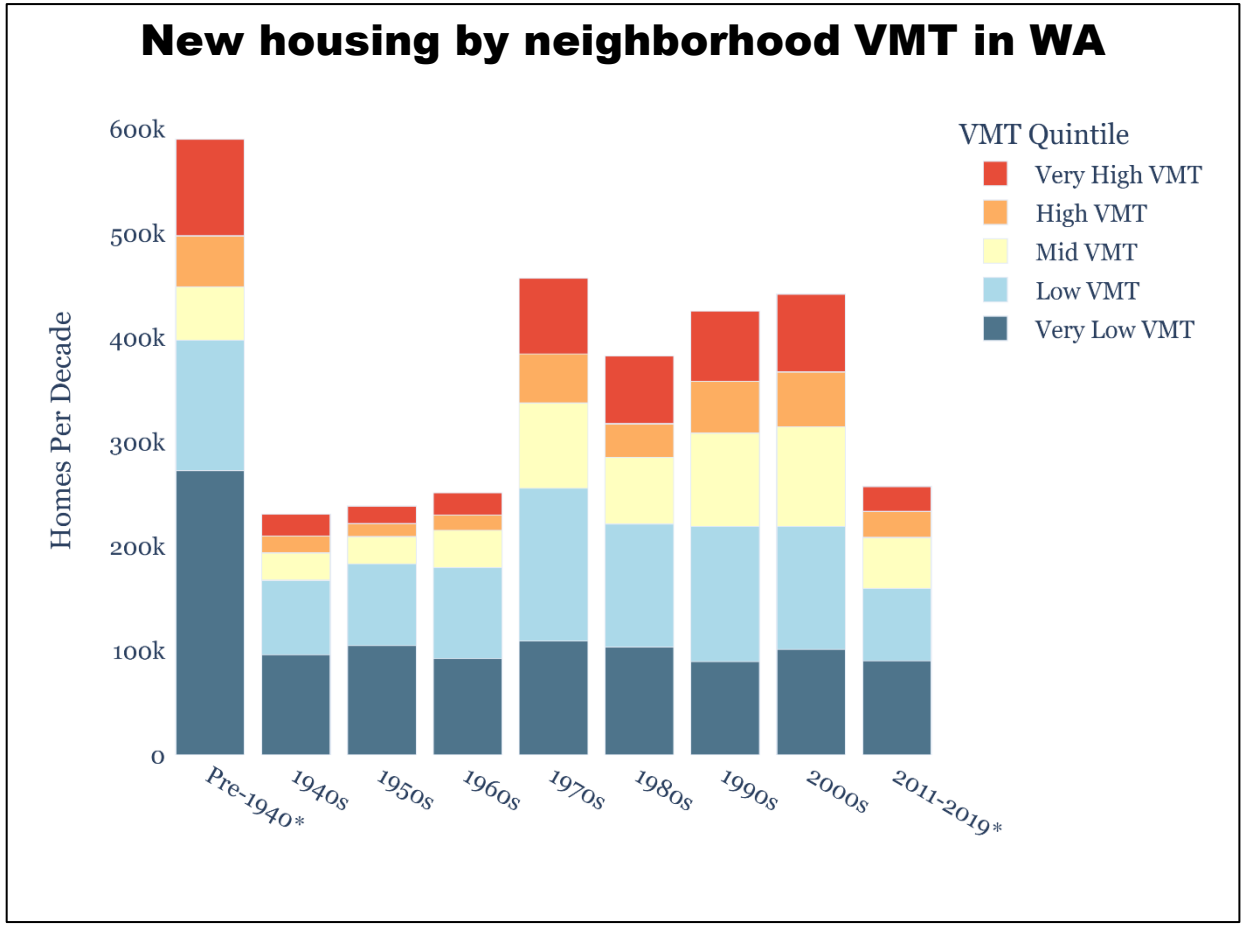
Housing Stability and location both influence opportunities for health, safety, and access.



Where We Build Housing Matters

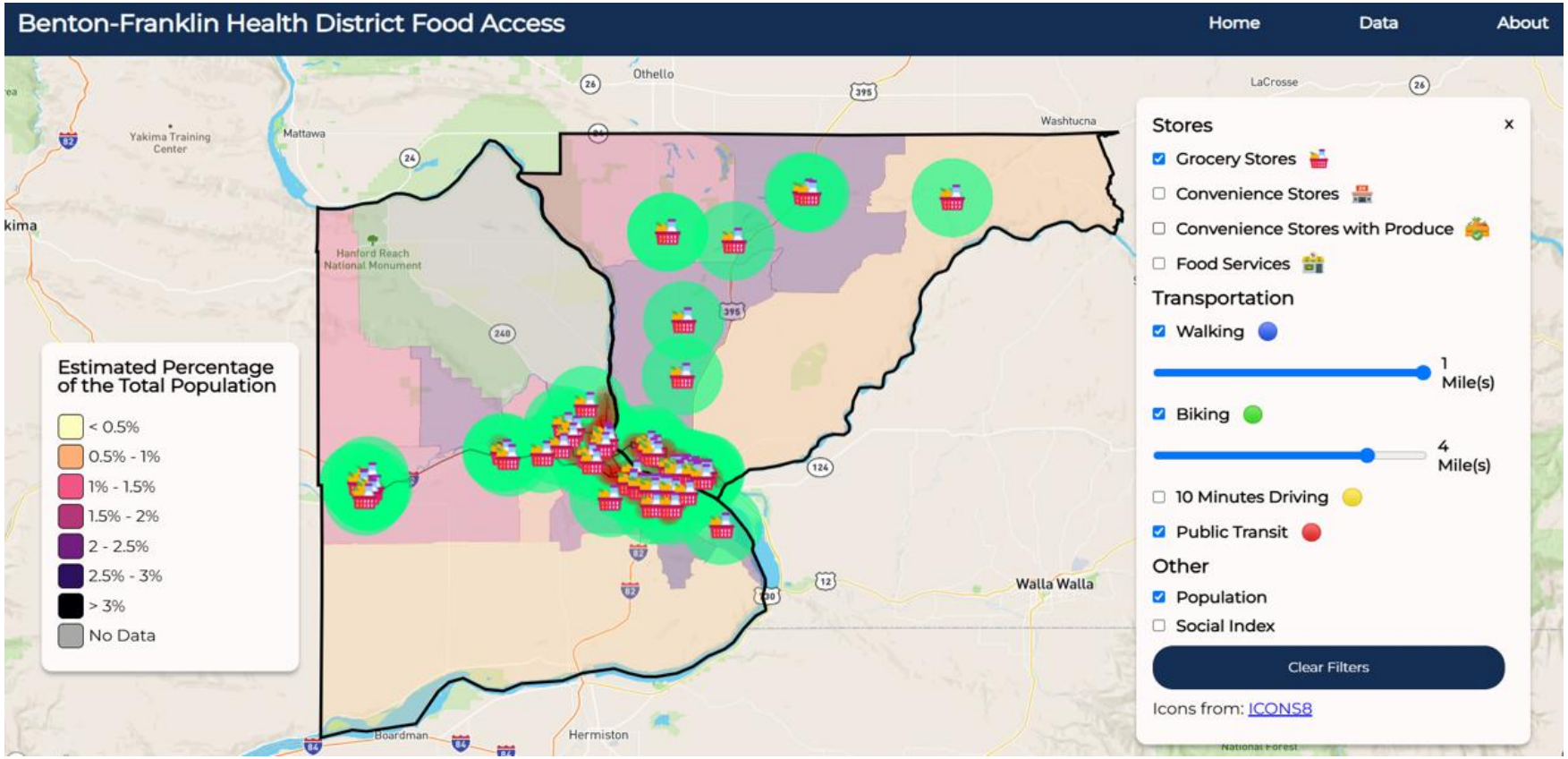
Housing growth and location shapes transportation safety outcomes

- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) can also help describe exposure in communities.
- When housing and everyday destinations are far from each other, people travel farther and face greater exposure.
- Proximity does not eliminate the need for travel, but it may reduce some routine trip distances and explain exposure.



Sources: Terner Center for Housing Innovation (2025), “Building Housing in Walkable Neighborhoods”

Food Access: Proximity Is Not the Same as Access



UW GIS Students: Jun Nguyen, Ivette Ivanov, and Justen Ho

What else would we need to know to understand whether people can actually reach these stores?

Other factors that can shape access:

- Sidewalks
- Crossings
- Safety
- Transit Service
- Accessibility
- Travel Routes

Food Access: Location Is Only One Part of Access

Access

Can I get there?

Distance
Routes
Transportation options

Can I get there safely?

Sidewalks
Crossings
Traffic & lighting

Can I use the route?

Disability access
Mobility needs
Route conditions

Does it work for my life?

Travel time
Service hours
Cost
Reliability

A destination can be nearby without being practically accessible.



Food Access Through Another Lens: FrEsCO/Nuestro Valor

UW-Led Partnership

FrEsCo/Nuestro Valor works with neighborhood stores serving Latino communities, customers, Community Health Workers, and regional partners

Focus

- Support Latino-serving neighborhood stores
- Increase fruit and vegetable access
- Understand and improve the local food environment

BFHD's Role

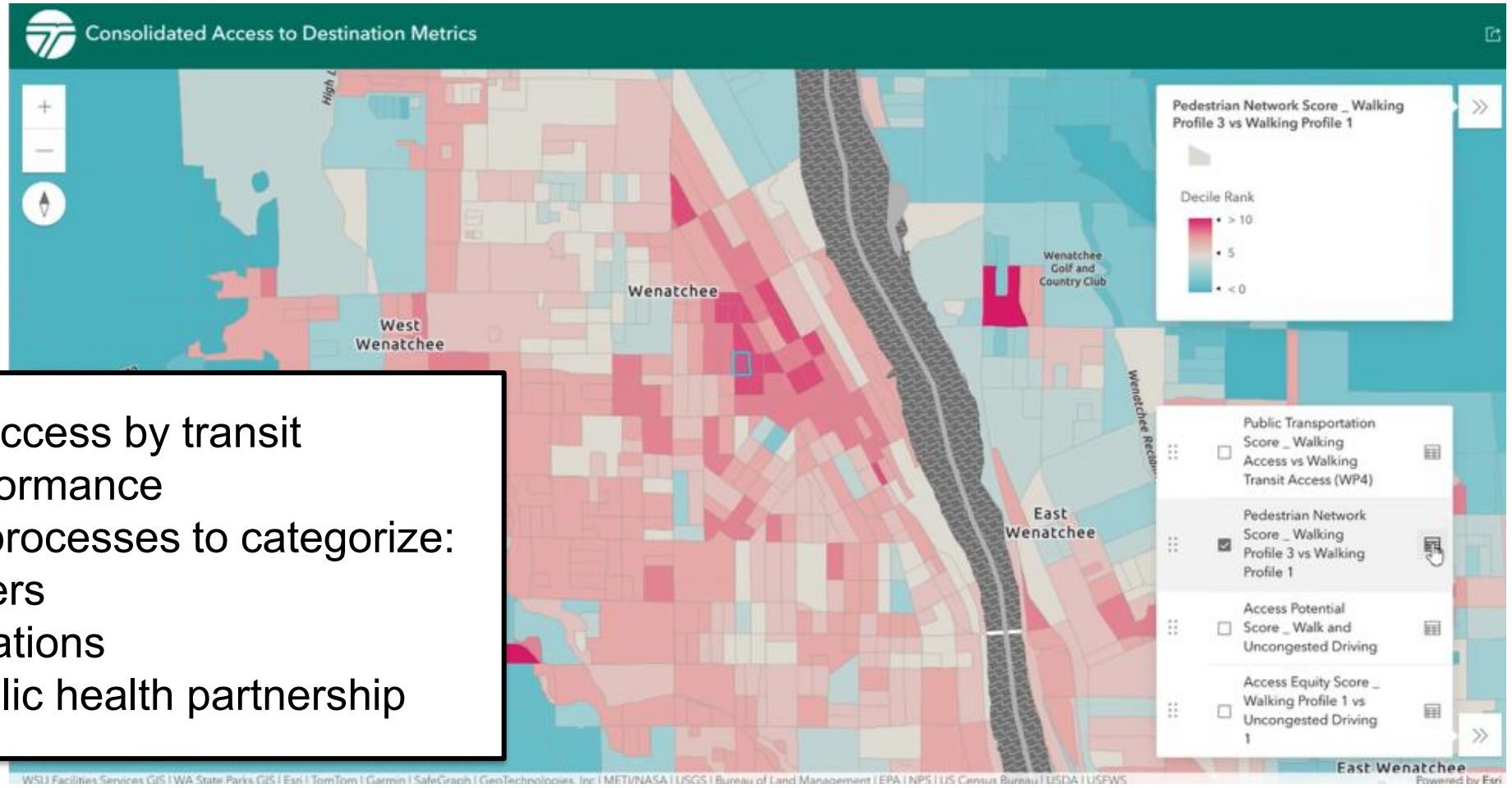
- Funded community partner
- Provide local context
- Participate in partner discussions
- Offer feedback and review

Transportation has come up in partner discussions as an area of interest for further exploration.

Who else should we be connecting with?



Destination Access



- Measuring access by transit
- System performance
- Developed processes to categorize:
  - Travelers
  - Destinations
- Value of public health partnership

What Public Health Can Bring to the Conversation

Data & Assessments

- Population characteristics and health inequities
- Community health assessments and identified access barriers
- Differences across populations and places

Community & Partner Context

- Everyday experiences and barriers data may miss
- Community organizations, coalitions, and CHWs
- Connections across housing, transportation, and health

Together, data and community context can help us better understand access barriers, who may be affected, and what planning decisions are overlooked.



Where Public Health Can Engage Upstream

Inform Planning Conversations

Share health data, community conditions, and access barriers

Participate in Regional Planning

Contribute public health perspectives through committees, assessments, and planning processes

Connect Across Sectors

Bring together community partners and agencies working on related issues

How can we bring public health perspectives into decisions before they are made?



Examples of Safer Land Use

Pasco – Street Connectivity and Housing

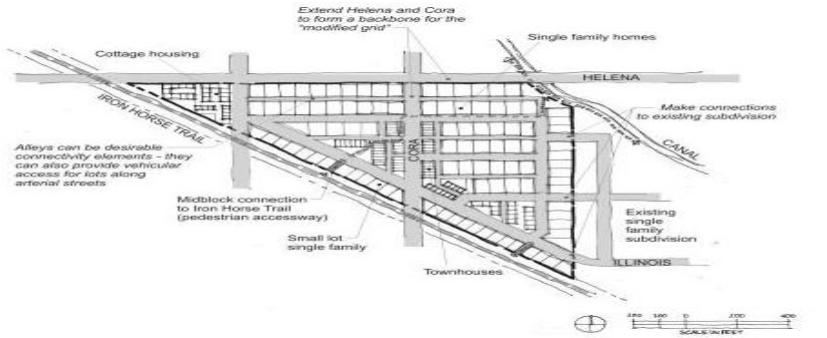
- Required connected streets and pedestrian pathways to increase accessibility and travel options.
- Increased housing options near destinations





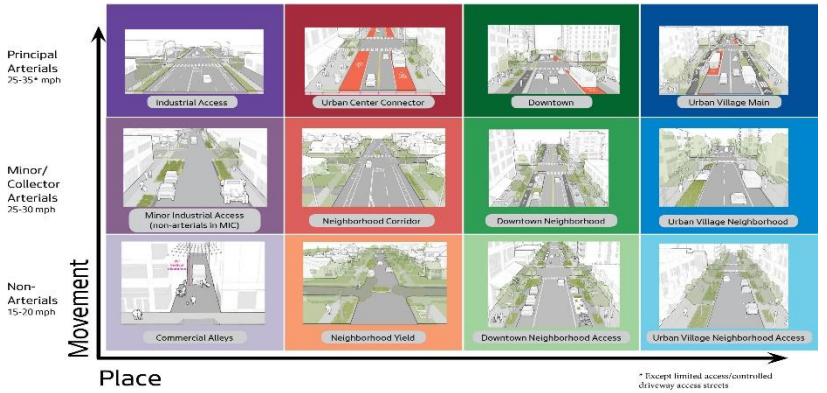
Ellensburg – Subdivision Design and Block Standards

- Required connected street networks and pedestrian connections in new developments.
- Establishes block design standards to support walkability



Seattle – Context Sensitive Design "Streets Illustrated"

- Linked design standards to land use and neighborhood context.
- Aligns roadway speed, design, and safety.

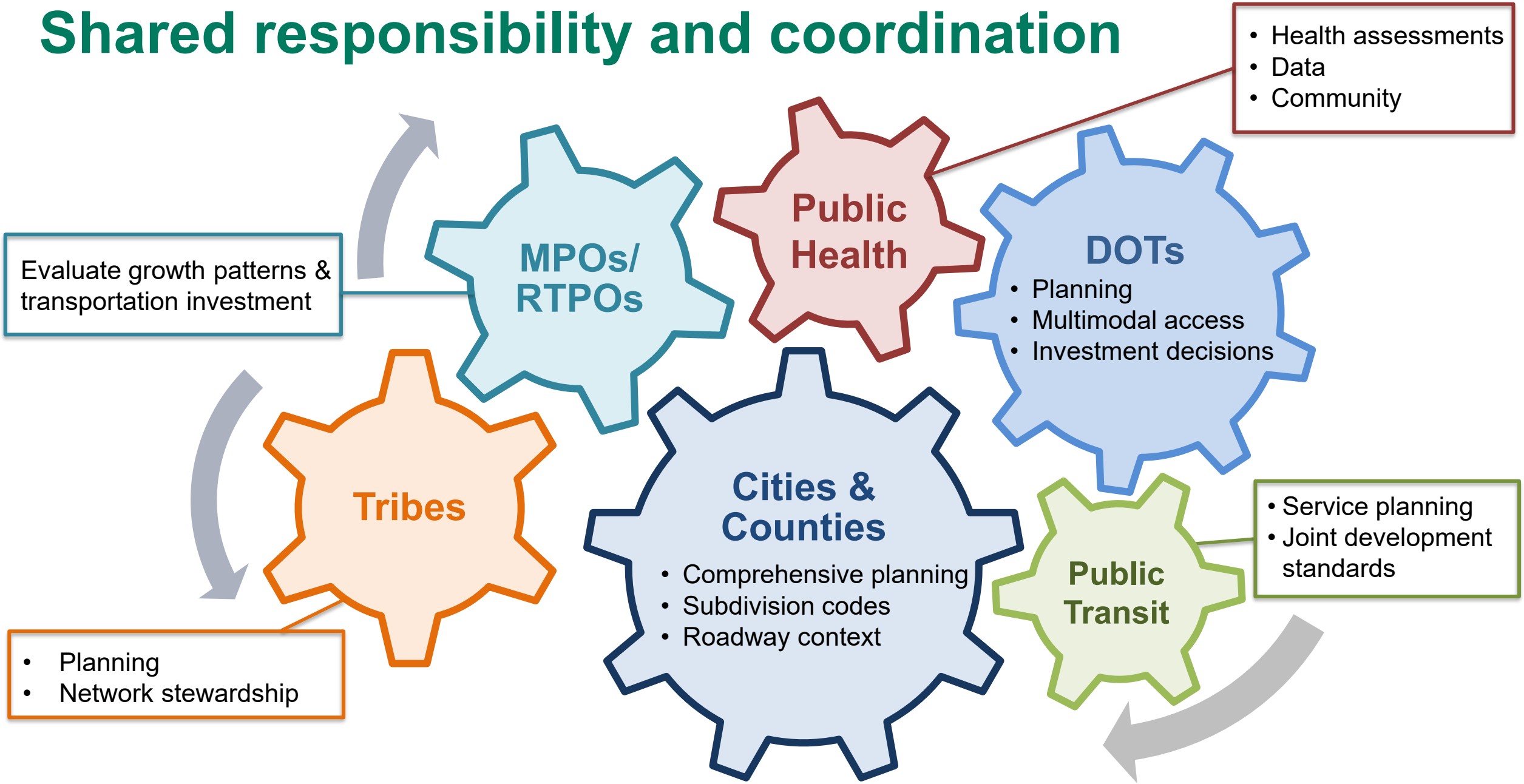


A couple minutes to chat

Connect with the person next to you for couple minutes and discuss your thoughts on:

- Where do transportation, housing, the built environment, and health intersect in your work?
- Where do you see opportunities in your work?

Shared responsibility and coordination



Thank You

Dani Walker, MPH
Senior Multimodal Transportation Planner
Washington State Department of Transportation
Danielle.walker@wsdot.wa.gov

Kelly Harnish, MPH, MCHES
Healthy Living Program Manager
Benton Franklin Health District
kelly.harnish@bfhd.wa.gov

Jacob B. Gonzalez, MPA
Senior Land Use and Transportation Planner
Washington State Department of Transportation
jacob.b.gonzalez@wsdot.wa.gov

Daisy Parra-Padilla, MPH, CHES
Policy Analyst, Equity and Engagement Program
Benton Franklin Health District
daisy.parra-padilla@bfhd.wa.gov