Building Healthy Rural Communities for Everyone!

Mark Fenton
Tufts University
Portland, ME
June 2019

A sign of hope in Ennis MT!
My comments:

- Perspective.
- Promising trends:
  1. Stealth teams
  2. Active engagement.
  3. Shifting demand.
  4. Design policies for health.
  5. TRYING STUFF! >
Both routes
Route B
PollEverywhere Question #1

If you walked from the Westin to the University for the meeting, or if you had to choose which route you would use if you were to walk, would you pick:

**Route A.** A few minutes longer; through Deering Oaks Park, on Deering Ave., right on Bedford Ave.

**Route B.** A few minutes shorter, along High Street and Forest Ave., left on Bedford Ave.
We should be physically active.
But mostly we are not.
Physical Activity in the US Measured by Accelerometer
(Troiano et.al., Med Sci Sports & Ex, 40(1), 2008)
Simply encouraging & educating is not enough.
Exercise Participation
Effect of Short Bouts, Home Treadmills
Exercise Participation

Effect of Short Bouts, Home Treadmills

- Walkable, Livable Communities.
- AARP/WHO Age-Friendly Communities.
- Sustainability; Smart Growth.
- Traditional Neighborhood Design, TND
- Transit Oriented Development, TOD
- Urban Land Institute, ULI
- Congress for a New Urbanism, CNU

health.gov/paguidelines >
PollEverywhere Question #2

Write in one or two words (at the most) a characteristic of a community that is supportive for walking, bicycling, and taking transit.

Note: DO NOT SAY “Nice weather” because we can’t change that in the short term, and nationally some of our most walkable communities are in very cold and very hot climates. However, you could mention an attribute that helps people deal with challenging weather conditions.
4 broad elements encourage active transportation . . .

Mixed Land Use

Networks

Safety & Access

Site Design
Age-friendly communities: Similar quality-of-life factors!
1. Build a “coalition?”
The “stealth” team:
2. **Active engagement:** Charrettes, walk audits, focus groups, photo-voice.
3. Engage policy-makers w/ the Triple Bottom Line

- Prosperity
- Healthy Economy
- Healthy People
- Healthy Environment
- Planet

www.markfenton.com
on common ground

WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Market Demand for Walkability
Linear Urban Parks
Walking for Healthy Living

realtor.org

Builderonline.com

Builder

Walkability
Why we care ... and why you should, too

www.markfenton.com
The economic pull of healthy designs:

1. Market demand
2. Market performance
3. Developer interest
4. Quantifiable health benefits!

www.markfenton.com
Policy goals: 4a. Complete Streets

completestreets.org

www.markfenton.com
Design guidance for small & rural communities . . .
Advisory shoulder

Lake St., Alburgh
Proposed out to Kootenai Wildlife Refuge, Bonners Ferry ID
A signature project of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the Great American Rail-Trail™—or the "Great American”—is the organization’s most ambitious trail project to date and will prove to be a national treasure as it unites millions of people over thousands of miles of trails. As the nation’s first cross-country multiuse trail, the Great American Rail-Trail will be entirely bikeable and walkable, connecting travelers of all ages and abilities with America’s diverse landscapes and communities. The preferred route stretches over 3,700 miles between Washington State and Washington, D.C. RTC is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities through a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. The Great American is the most ambitious project in RTC’s TrailNation™ portfolio—an initiative to encourage the rapid replication of regional trail networks across the country.

railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail/
4c. Planning, zoning, subdivision regulations:

Fairfax VT

www.markfenton.com
E.g. “Box” stores . . .
4. Try stuff! E.g. temporary protected bike lane.
Replace 4-way stops with mini-circles (small roundabouts).

Madison WI

Lawrence KS

www.markfenton.com
Livingston MT demonstration.

Possible mini-circle?
Inexpensive demonstration roundabout (Goshen CT)

www.markfenton.com
The two questions that are NOT the real problem:

- **Technical.** How do we do it? What are best practices?
- **Financial.** How do we pay for it? Where’s the money?
Suggestions

• Create an *interdisciplinary* working group.
• Get community vision, offer a unified voice.
• Complete Streets during other work.
• Build trails to actually connect things.
• Zone for walkability & access. (Less building out on the edge – esp. housing!)
• TRY MORE STUFF!
“But I’d never ride or walk there . . .”
“You don’t have to . . .”