

DESCRIPTION

In 2015, the Surgeon General of the U.S. issued a call to action to promote walking and walkable communities where people of all ages and abilities walk because it is a convenient, fun, safe and healthy choice.^{1,2} Elements of walkability include road conditions, affordable housing near businesses, parks and public places to gather and play, and streets that are designed for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as transit.³ In addition to the many health benefits associated with physical activity, making walking easier can improve safety, increase interaction among residents, improve local economies, and reduce air pollution.⁴ On the other hand, the lack of walkable streets can lead to poorer health including high blood pressure, weight gain, chronic illness, depression and anxiety.⁵

HOW WE ARE DOING

Ramsey County measures walkability by calculating the Pedestrian Level of Service (PLOS) of county streets. PLOS is determined by three factors: the presence or absence of sidewalks, the posted speed limit of the roadway and the surrounding land use context. Streets are then assigned a PLOS rating of good, fair, poor or hostile. Streets with a good rating tend to have lower speed limits, with sidewalks on one or both sides. Currently, fewer than half the streets in Ramsey County have a good PLOS. The percentage of streets rated good in areas of concentrated poverty is higher than the countywide average, mostly due to the higher number of sidewalks in these predominantly urban areas. The percentage of streets rated hostile in areas of concentrated poverty is equal to the countywide average. However, the percentage of hostile streets in areas of extreme concentrated poverty is higher than the countywide average, reflecting the burden that major highways and arterial roadways place on many of these communities. Hostile streets typically lack sidewalks and shoulders, meaning that pedestrians must travel in traffic lanes to reach local destinations. Other hostile streets such as interstate highways prohibit pedestrians and bicycles entirely. These streets carry faster, more dangerous vehicle traffic, and expose pedestrians to high levels of noise and air pollution. They also tend to have fewer homes and other buildings that face the street, which reduces peoples' ability to observe activity on the street and correlates with higher rates of crime.⁶

DISPARITIES

At the national level, research has shown that people of color and older adults are overrepresented among pedestrian deaths.⁷ In U.S. metro areas lower median household income and higher rates of people without health insurance both correlate with a higher risk of being struck and killed by a car while walking.⁸ Areas of extreme concentrated poverty in Ramsey County have a higher percentage of streets with a hostile PLOS than the (continued on back)

Information to note

- Lack of walkable streets can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle and associated negative health impacts.
- In Ramsey County, fewer than half the streets are rated as having a good Pedestrian Level of Service.

¹Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/walking-and-walkable-communities/index.html>. Accessed August 7, 2018.

²Ramsey County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan: Purpose, Vision and Goals. Ramsey County. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Projects%20and%20Initiatives/Section%201%20-%20Purpose%20Vision%20and%20Goals%20Web.pdf>. Accessed October 25, 2017.

³Walkable Neighborhoods. Walk Score. <https://www.walkscore.com/walkable-neighborhoods.shtml>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

⁴Seymour MW. Walkable Mississippi: Introduction to walking and walkability issues. Mississippi State University Extension. 2017. <http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/p3110.pdf>. Published July 2017. Accessed August 7, 2018.

⁵National Physical Activity Plan. National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity. <http://www.ncppa.org/national-physical-activity-plan>. Accessed August 7, 2018.

⁶Active Design Supplement: Promoting Safety. John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. 2013. https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-injury-research-and-policy/_docs/publications-resources/ActiveDesignSupplement.pdf. Accessed August 7, 2018.

⁷The best complete streets policies of 2016. Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/the-best-complete-streets-policies-of-2016/?download=yes&key=43751417>. Accessed July 19, 2017.

⁸Dangerous by Design 2016. Smart Growth America. 2017. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>. Accessed August 24, 2018.

county average. Areas of concentrated poverty in Ramsey County have a higher percentage of streets with a good PLOS than the county average.

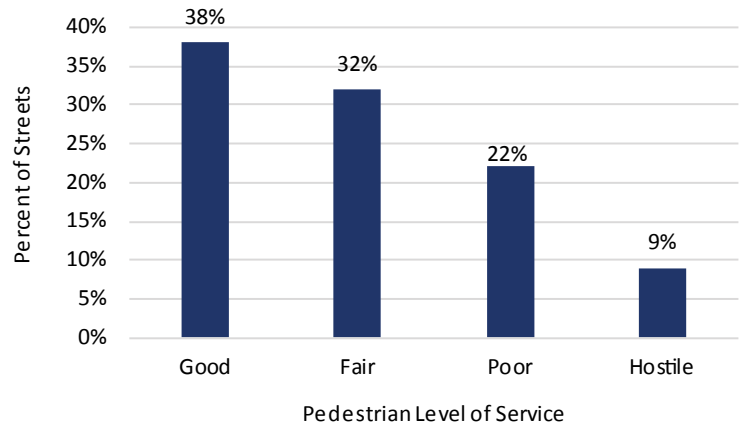
RISK FACTORS

People in low-income households are nearly twice as likely to walk as people in other income groups, in part because they are less likely to own a car.⁹ Some research has shown that socially vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people of color, people living in poverty, and people with lower educational attainment tend to live in neighborhoods with lower walkability.¹⁰

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

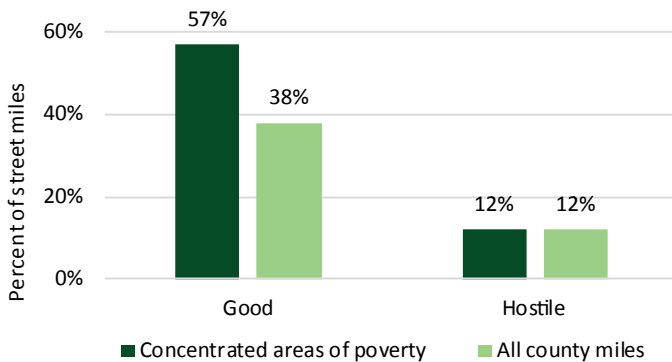
Ramsey County has implemented an All Abilities Transportation Network Policy, which prioritizes transportation system users to ensure the most vulnerable users (pedestrians) are always considered first during transportation planning and implementation. This creates a fundamental system change to encourage more walkable communities and neighborhoods through ongoing and future transportation projects. Additionally, Active Living Ramsey Communities is facilitating implementation of the Ramsey County-wide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan by coordinating with other governmental units to create quality pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, trails and other pedestrian-friendly facilities. Finally, Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) encourages implementation of Safe Routes to School: a comprehensive framework that uses infrastructure to build safer, walkable areas around schools; and uses education, enforcement, and encouragement to build a culture and environment of safe walking for all.

Pedestrian Level of Service on Ramsey County Streets, 2016



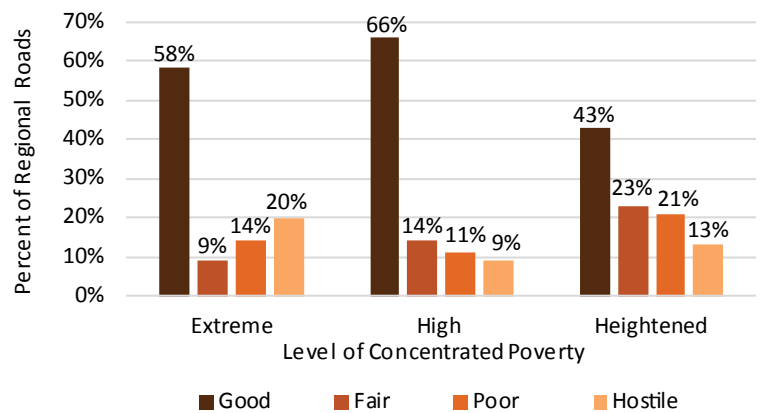
Source: Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department. 2017.

Pedestrian Level of Service in Concentrated Areas of Poverty, Ramsey County, 2016



Source: Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department.

Pedestrian Level of Service by Level of Poverty, Ramsey County, 2016



Source: Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department.

⁹Murakami E, Young J. Daily Travel by persons with low income. Paper presented at: African American Mobility Symposium; April 3-May 2, 1997; Tampa, FL. <https://nhits.ornl.gov/1995/Doc/LowInc.pdf>. Accessed August 8, 2018.

¹⁰Bereitschaft B. Equity in neighbourhood walkability? A comparative analysis of three large U.S. cities. The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability. 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2017.1297390>. Published March 3, 2017. Accessed August 8, 2018.