# Promoting Physical Activity

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## Live Well Omaha

*Activate Omaha*

### Program Goals

- Expand a one-day cycling event to an ongoing behavior change initiative.
- Increase the physical activity levels of Omahans.
- Increase awareness of the bicycle as a means of transportation.
- Create an environment that supports active living.

### Program Components

- Annual 14-week bike-to-work challenge.
- Used existing worksite wellness programs to promote and encourage "bike to work" as a healthy alternative to traditional commuting.
- Secured local CEO support and buy-in.
- Encouraged the development of bike lanes throughout community.
- Encouraged employer "soft policies," such as providing bike racks and offering flextime, were encouraged to remove barriers to participation.

### Program Highlights

- Program participation since 2006:
  - –Year 1: 26 teams, 300 riders, 76,000 miles
  - –Year 2: 32 teams, 410 riders, 109,000 miles
  - –Year 3: 60 teams, 900 riders, 134,000 miles
  - –Year 4: 46 teams, 697 riders, 129,000 miles
- Acquired support and funding for:
  - –Bicycle transportation map.
  - –Bicycle pedestrian advisory committee to the Mayor.
  - –The first balanced transportation coordinator.
  - –20 miles of bike lanes, trail expansions, etc.

"The support from CEOs for employee wellness programs has led to significant changes in both the physical environment of the Omaha community and the lives of its citizens."

### Value Proposition

Physical inactivity contributes to poor health, including increased risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporotic fractures, depression, and injuries related to falls. Fortunately, even moderate increases in physical activity can help improve fitness and agility, reduce health risks, and help maintain a healthy body weight.[20] Every week, adults should spend 2–1/2 hours doing moderately–intense aerobic activity or 1–1/4 hours doing vigorously–intense aerobic activity (or an equivalent combination), in addition to performing muscle–strengthening activities more than 2 days per week.[21]

### Business Case

The direct cost of physical inactivity in the United States is $24 to $67 billion annually, approaching 5 percent of national health care expenditures.[20] The cost difference between an active person and an inactive person can be as high as $330 per person.[22] The fact is, if inactive American adults were to become physically active, the savings could be $76.6 billion, in year 2000 dollars.[23]

Higher activity levels have been demonstrated in communities in which planning and decisions for land use, zoning ordinances, school and other institutional policies, street design, and the presence of bicycle and pedestrian pathways help remove barriers and improve access to physical activity.[24,25] The experience of one midwest city illustrates the cost–effectiveness of improving access and availability of opportunities for activity. After the city developed, constructed, and maintained bike and pedestrian trails at a cost of $209.28 per person per year, the annual direct medical benefits of using the trails was $564.41 per capita, a cost–benefit ratio of 2:94.[26]

Beyond direct costs, the indirect costs of inactivity, (i.e., absenteeism, presenteeism, short–term disability, and on–the–job injury) affect the health and viability of businesses and communities alike.

### Ideas That Work

- Establish, fund, or provide community–wide campaigns.
  - –Place point–of–decision prompts (e.g., signage near stairs to promote benefits of activity) in public buildings.