Low-cost investments like bike lanes, walking paths, sidewalks & parks encourage physical activity.

Health Benefits of Active Travel and Play:
Active travel – walking and cycling – increases daily physical activity and helps protect against obesity and related chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes.¹

- Only 34% of youth in Louisiana are engaged in vigorous physical activity on a daily basis.²
- About 30% of adults in Louisiana are physically inactive.³

Obesity rates are higher in counties/parishes with more sprawl and lower in communities where commercial and residential areas are mixed.⁴,⁵,⁶ Each additional hour a person spends in a car is associated with a 6% increase in the risk of obesity.⁶

Economic Benefits to Communities:
- Parks and recreation areas can lead to increased property values for nearby homes.⁷
- Open spaces, recreation areas and walkable neighborhoods may benefit municipal governments through higher tax revenues and cost savings.⁷
- Interest in and demand for compact or walkable development is growing.⁷
- Businesses along bike lanes have reported increased commercial activity.⁸

The Financial Burden:
- Louisiana ranks 1st in the U.S. for obesity – and translates to one in three people being obese.³
- Obesity-related illness is estimated to carry a cost of $190 billion annually in the United States.⁹
- Medicare and Medicaid spending would be 8.5 percent and 11.8 percent lower, respectively, in the absence of obesity.¹⁰
- One study found that for every $1 spent on walking and biking trails, there was almost $3 in savings in direct medical costs.¹¹

Using best practices, small changes can lead to a healthier and more productive Louisiana.

Successful Strategies at Work:
**Bike lanes:** The city of New Orleans added more than 37 miles of bike lanes on 16 streets between 2008 and 2013. Tulane PRC research has found that bike lanes lead to dramatic increases in daily cycling and increased safe cycling (riding in the correct direction with traffic.)

- On South Carrollton Avenue, the number of people cycling increased 225 percent after a set of one-mile long bike lanes were striped in 2010. Riders increased from 79 people daily to 257 people daily.¹²
- After bike lanes were installed on St. Claude Avenue in 2008, daily cycling increased 57 percent – from 90 people to 143 people.¹³

(See reverse for more examples)
Walking paths: Improvements for pedestrians are also important to residents and visitors, as we know that many adults meet their daily physical activity needs by walking. In 2007 the Tulane PRC, in partnership with the City of New Orleans, installed a walking path on a neutral ground in one neighborhood (St. Roch Avenue) and found that the proportion of residents being physically active increased throughout the entire neighborhood around the path. Since then, the city has also installed walking paths on other neutral grounds in several other neighborhoods (Broadmoor & New Orleans East).

Park amenities: Research from the Tulane PRC and others found that New Orleans parks that include sports fields, basketball courts and playgrounds not only attract large groups of people but also lead people in those areas to expend more energy than areas without amenities.

Complete Streets policies: Roads that accommodate all modes of transportation – not just vehicles – promote safety for residents with disabilities, public transit users, bicyclists and pedestrians and can cut down on traffic congestion. In 2011, the New Orleans’ City Council adopted a Complete Streets law for all city roads. Louisiana also has a statewide policy for state-owned roads and provides annual updates about the state’s progress toward Complete Streets.

Greenways: The Lafitte Greenway, a 3.1-mile long urban trail and green space in New Orleans, is an example of a partnership between local government and private entities. Once complete, the greenway will include fields, gardens and a bicycling and pedestrian path linking neighborhoods, cultural features, historic sites, retail areas and public spaces.

Shared-use agreements: Local governments or school districts can share use of their property through shared-use agreements. These are formal contracts that support physical activity, such as opening school playgrounds for public use after school hours or allowing schools to use recreation district property for sports or PE. Louisiana law limits the liability of schools and government agencies. One Tulane PRC study found an 84% increase in the number of children being physically active outdoors when a schoolyard opened after school in New Orleans.

References