

Assessing the long-term impacts from our transportation system

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Health Impact Assessment, Health in All Policies, Health Equity, Health and Transportation

ABSTRACT:

Background: Health Impact Assessments are used to understand the health impacts, both positive and negative, of a particular policy or decision. Using HIA to inform transportation and land use planning from a health perspective affords a systematic approach to ensuring we create health-promoting environments. While many HIAs assess the impacts from a specific transportation plan or investment, we will share our experience using HIA to better understand the impacts over a much longer period of time. Methods: Washington County was awarded \$1.5M from the state legislature to study the long-term transportation strategies and investments needed to sustain the county's economic health and quality of life for the coming decades. In the course of the study, Washington County Public Health, along with Green Health Consulting were afforded the opportunity to inform that study through an HIA. The HIA uses a mix of health impact modeling tools, qualitative research and community engagement to understand the impact to public health. Results: Applying an HIA to such a long-range study presented a number of challenges, however our findings reaffirmed the notion that transportation impacts health through a variety of direct and in-direct pathways. Further more it revealed that investments in multi-modal transportation systems can pay big dividends in-terms of public health benefits. Conclusion: HIA remains an important tool for public health advocates and practitioners. We will discuss (1) the benefits of using HIA in this particular project, (2) highlight relevant resources for emerging and seasoned HIA practitioners and (3) focus on approaches to assessing health impacts from an equity perspective.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Describe the basic framework of health impact assessment.
- Evaluate and discuss the results of our HIA on the Washington County Transportation Futures Study.
- Discuss approaches to assessing health impacts from an equity perspective.

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