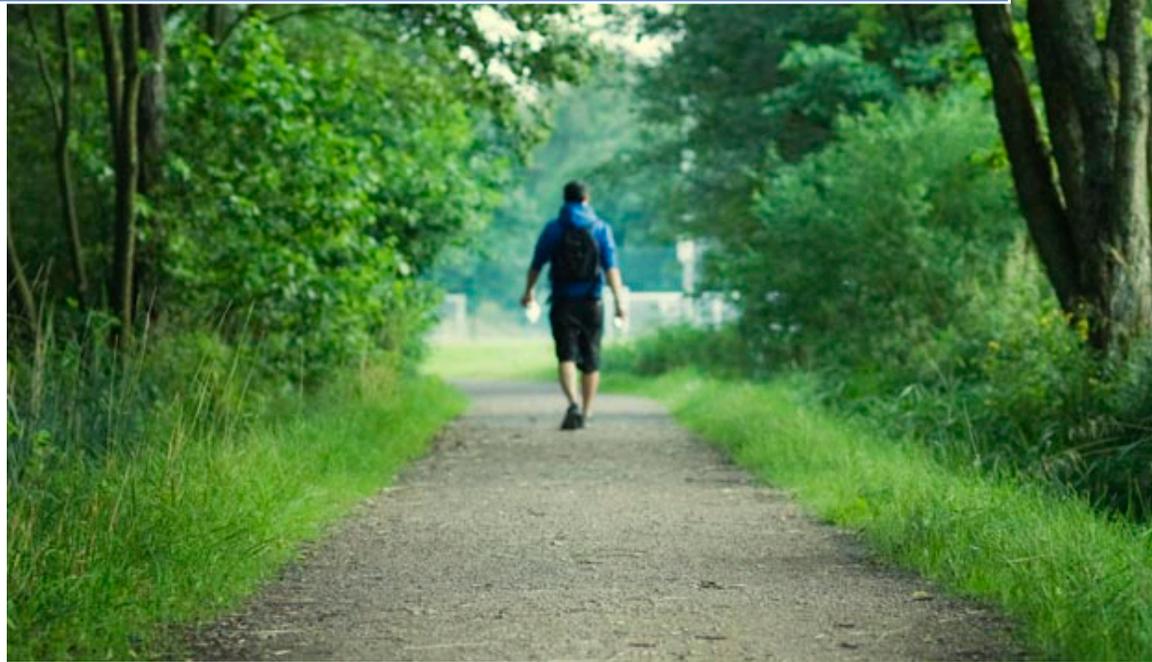


2013

Walking and Biking Trails Summit Report



Two Rivers Convention Center
Grand Junction, Colorado
Friday, March 8, 2013

Thank you to all of the 2013 Walking and Biking Trails Summit organizers and sponsors:



Grand Valley Bikes



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Executive Summary

On March 8, 2013, a diverse group of local and regional organizations hosted the inaugural Walking and Biking Trails Summit at the Two Rivers Convention Center, with the goal of building understanding and support for the value and importance of safe sidewalks, bike lanes and trails in the Grand Valley. With more than 150 people in attendance, the Summit was an exciting event for our community.

The summit's Master of Ceremonies, Bill Haggerty, and guest speaker Bennett Boeschstein, both longtime residents of Grand Junction, addressed the colorful and sometimes contentious history of walking and biking trails in the region. Two panel discussions featuring medical professionals, researchers, and business leaders explored the economic benefits of well-built trail networks and the health and safety impacts of trail use. Summit attendees also participated in eight separate breakout sessions that addressed everything from the transportation planning process to the development of worksite wellness initiatives.

Keynote speaker Dan Burden of the Walkable, Livable Communities Institute addressed how communities can become safer, more livable, and promote a healthier lifestyle for their residents. Burden provided many examples of how a walkable, livable community plays a vital role in supporting the local economy, improving traffic safety for all, and reducing congestion as well as pollution.

The Summit concluded with a call to action – a call that has not gone unheeded. Collaborative efforts to advocate for improving and expanding the Grand Valley's trail systems are stronger than ever. Most importantly, the Summit brought various members of our community together with a common message, or vision for the future – a vision that has energized the efforts of the past year.

This report provides a summary of the 2013 Walking and Biking Trails Summit proceedings. More information about the Summit is available at www.trailsummit.com.

Summit organizers and supporters include: Mesa County Regional Transportation Planning Organization, Mesa County Health Department, the Urban Trails Committee, the Riverfront Commission, the City of Grand Junction, the City of Fruita, the Town of Palisade, Grand Valley Bikes, Grand Valley Trails Alliance, COPMOBA, St. Mary's Hospital, Community Hospital and others.

Panel Discussions

Health & Safety Benefits of Trail Use

Panel Moderator

Randall Reitz, Director of Behavioral Sciences at St. Mary's Family Medicine Residency

Physical Benefits

Keith Dickerson, Faculty Physician of St. Mary's Family Medicine Residency, Urban Trails Committee member

Obesity is an epidemic, and one that will bankrupt our country if we can't get a handle on it. It is the root cause of at least a dozen types of cancer and diabetes. It contributes to arthritis and cardiovascular disease, and we're on a trajectory for it to get much worse. Places with more trails and bike paths have higher levels of physical activity and lower obesity rates. However, increased amounts of exercise are associated most strongly with improved health outcomes, but not necessarily with weight loss. Be a role model, for your children and for others around you. For example, bike commute – which is not a big deal if you do basic planning and start with one day a week. Little changes add up eventually to a big change.

Psychosocial Benefits

Brian Parry, Social Psychology Faculty of Colorado Mesa University

A full 50% of Americans recreated in the outdoors in 2010, making it a \$300 billion industry. Why do they do it? His research, conducted at trails throughout Mesa County, has identified seven higher order reasons for recreating outdoors:

- community cohesion
- economic
- relationship with nature
- physical enhancement
- interpersonal correlation – bonding in nature
- mental serenity
- independence

Knowing the psychosocial and other benefits that users gain from recreating outdoors can help inform how we manage public lands and open space. Be a part of the planning process. Public entities want public input on at least two projects – Matchett Park and the trail from downtown to Lunch Loops (the Monument Road Corridor). Spread the word and take part in planning to make these the best they can be.

Benefits for Children

Jenna Berman, Education Director of Bicycle Colorado

Colorado is the most fit state, but the extreme fitness of our adult population statistically masks the big problem of obesity among our children. Among states, Colorado ranks 23rd for childhood obesity. One fourth of our kids are overweight, largely because so few kids spend much time engaged in physical play anymore. Safe Routes to School was created because getting kids to bike and walk to school could help turn around the epidemic of childhood obesity, since getting to and from school are things they have to do every day. Funding for Safe Routes to School is granted to State transportation departments by the federal government, and then awarded to local groups if they apply for it. Grand Valley Bikes has had two successful grants,



has taught bike safety in many elementary schools already, and has a bike fleet. We need to help parents feel that it is safe enough for their kids to bike or walk to school, so we are working to help start Walking School Buses or Bicycle Trains. Support Grand Valley Bikes: they are doing awesome work. Stay informed and volunteer to help get kids safely to and from school.

Benefits for Seniors

Scott Coleman, Retired director of St. Mary's Life Center, supervised cardiovascular rehabilitation and Silver Sneakers programs

Trails are important in keeping aging adults healthy and physically fit. All adults should exercise, because if you don't use it, you lose it. Use of trails provides five major benefits. First, when adults use trails, they work their cardiovascular systems, stressing them in a good way. Second, walking on trails provides both muscular and bone benefits – decreasing osteoporosis and keeping joints healthy while maintaining and strengthening muscles. Third, the use of trails maintains flexibility and improves posture, both of which are crucial as we age. Fourth, when we walk on trails, we improve our balance and train our proprioceptive abilities. Finally, trail usage offers the psychosocial benefits that Brian Parry addressed in his presentation. You are already role models for the rest of the community. Scott suggested that we take it upon ourselves to be organizers. Before the month is out, please invite your neighbor or a friend to go out on a trail with you. They won't even notice that they're exercising.

Wrap-Up

What prevents a person from using trails more? Self-efficacy. When you're talking with someone, as an organizer, keep in mind what their obstacles might be, to help them imagine themselves as someone who can use trails. Open up a window of self-

efficacy for them.

Economic Impacts of Trails

Panel Moderator

Jay Seaton, Publisher of The Daily Sentinel and Chair of the Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP) Board of Directors

The old rules of how communities promote economic development have gone out the window, and it is no longer feasible to compete by just offering more financial incentives. Now communities have to offer unique, tantalizing opportunities. The Grand Valley has beautiful surroundings and a high quality of life, and access to trails plays a major role in that. From a business perspective, trails are a significant draw for employers, employees and visitors in the Valley. Trail use is growing exponentially nationwide; in fact, cycling has surpassed golf as the number one pastime for doctors... and that says a lot.



Emerging Trends for Real Estate

Paul Zurek, Broker Associate at Bray Real Estate

Current real estate market trends are mostly influenced by retiring Baby Boomers and the up-and-coming Millennials (also known as Generation Y, those born in the 1980s and 1990s). Baby Boomers want to transition into smaller homes and lots with surrounding amenities as well as stay in their homes longer. Millennials want to enjoy all the amenities that urban areas have to offer, including walkable, bikeable communities that are easy get around. Car ownership among Millennials is significantly lower than previous generations.

Trails and greenways increase the natural beauty of communities and have been shown to bolster property values. Studies in Indianapolis and Austin found significant increases in the values of properties near trails and greenways. Realizing the selling power of greenways, developers of the Shepherd's Vineyard housing development in Apex, N.C. added \$5,000 to the price of 40 homes adjacent to the regional greenway and those homes were the first to sell. In Dallas, "builders say having a project on the Katy Trail has become money in the bank. Some builders say there is a 25% price premium for having their product back up against the Katy Trail" (Dallas Morning News, December 2006). Grand Junction has the same potential with the tremendous views and opportunities for trail access.

Economic Benefits of Cycling and Trails Events

Barbara Bowman, Manager of Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau

The mission of the Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB) is to proactively market the Grand Junction area, resulting in the positive economic impact of visitor dollars. Events are a compelling reason for a visitor to come. Tied to the events, the Grand Valley is promoted as its “ings”: biking, running, hiking, rafting, dining, shopping, wine-ing. There has been growth in the number of events, including cycling and trail events.

The economic impacts of visitors are measured in dollars spent on lodging, food, gas, equipment and entertainment. The VCB uses a customized economic formula to measure direct spending of event attendees. It is estimated that the 3-day Tour of the Moon generated \$564,097, the 2-day Ride the Rockies generated \$500,000 and the upcoming Grand Junction Off-Road will generate in excess of \$300,000.

Business Leader Perspective

Chip Barbieri, CEO of DT Swiss

Even though DT Swiss makes bicycle components, management was not convinced that an employee-promoted bike-to-work program made good business sense. Really, the business benefits of a walkable, bikeable community are not immediately obvious. It cost about \$5,000 to implement a program that included a shower and a place to park bikes and work on them.

Once the investment was made and the program picked up steam, however, management started to see indirect benefits of the program, such as smoking cessation, weight loss, improved physical fitness and attitude adjustment. Employee morale improved, partly due to company-sponsored breakfasts, lunches, and even some weekend activities for bike-to-work participants. Better teamwork led to increased productivity. Participating employees also contribute to community events, such as the Tour of the Valley and the Rose Hill Rally. One undeniable direct financial benefit of the program was the cost avoidance achieved in a building expansion project in which the parking area that was required was reduced. The program saved the company over \$70,000.

Currently, 54% of the 28 employees participate in the program. Much of the early success can be attributed to the good trail system that is in place already. However, some of the employees do not participate because of gaps in the route system. 21% say they would use the trails if they were available.

The benefits of a walkable, bikeable community keep the Swiss parent company interested in expansion here in the Valley for the long term, preserve property values, make prospective future employees think about this region positively, and help to keep employees here once they've made the commitment to the company.

Quality of Life Drives Business Development

Mariah Campbell, Business Development Manager with Grand Junction Economic Partnership (GJEP)

The Grand Junction Economic Partnership is the primary economic development program for Mesa County. In helping to expand and recruit businesses, they've found that quality of life is an important recruitment tool and the Grand Valley's outdoor amenities are a unique attraction. Business owners choose to move here because of personal connections, many times because they've visited for the outdoor opportunities. Employees are attracted because of the outdoor opportunities, and many hiring processes include an outdoor activity, such as riding the Monument or mountain biking.

Walking and biking trails are an important component to attracting new residents and new businesses. Benefits include increased property values, wellness of Valley residents, development of lifestyle businesses and retail (i.e. outdoor gear businesses), hosting successful events, and offering beautiful corporate locations. Other cities that have featured trails in their development plans include the Pueblo Riverwalk, which attracted a call center, the Bricktown Canal project in Oklahoma, which increased property values over 200%, and the San Antonio Riverwalk, which receives over 5 million visitors annually.

Wrap-up

There is value in our community being branded as having great trails and access to outdoor opportunities. It leads to a happier, healthier workforce and is an effective recruitment tool. Trails and outdoor opportunities are a significant recruitment tool for Colorado Mesa University, and making the community more walkable and bikeable is a huge benefit to the safety, traffic and parking in and around campus. Developers need to recognize current real estate trends and start offering products that cater to the aging Baby Boomers and upcoming Millennials. Some potential ways to quantify the benefits include comparing various businesses from different communities in terms of health care costs and productivity. We could also do a trail intercept study to determine economic benefit. Clearly, trails provide a great return on a relatively small investment, improving air quality, transportation, recreation and general quality of life.



Guest Speaker

Bennett Boeschenstein

Councilman, Grand Junction City Council

The City of Grand Junction's goal is to become one of the most livable communities in Colorado. To highlight how far our community has come, Boeschenstein recalled his first experiences moving here in 1982 and trying to bicycle and walk. Following on his 30 years of experience as a planner in the Valley, Bennett offered the following advice for achieving our goal:

- Continue the Riverfront Trail
- Continue with Safe Routes to School
- Continue building pedestrian linkages
- Work with the BLM on their Resource Management Plan (RMP)
- Canal trails – we need them, no reason we can't have them



Keynote Speaker

Dan Burden

Executive Director, The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

Dan Burden is the nation's most recognized authority on walking, bicycling, active living, and alternative transportation. He began by painting a picture of local economies in the US and around the world. Every street that has not been completed must be. Downtowns must come back to life or towns will cease to exist.



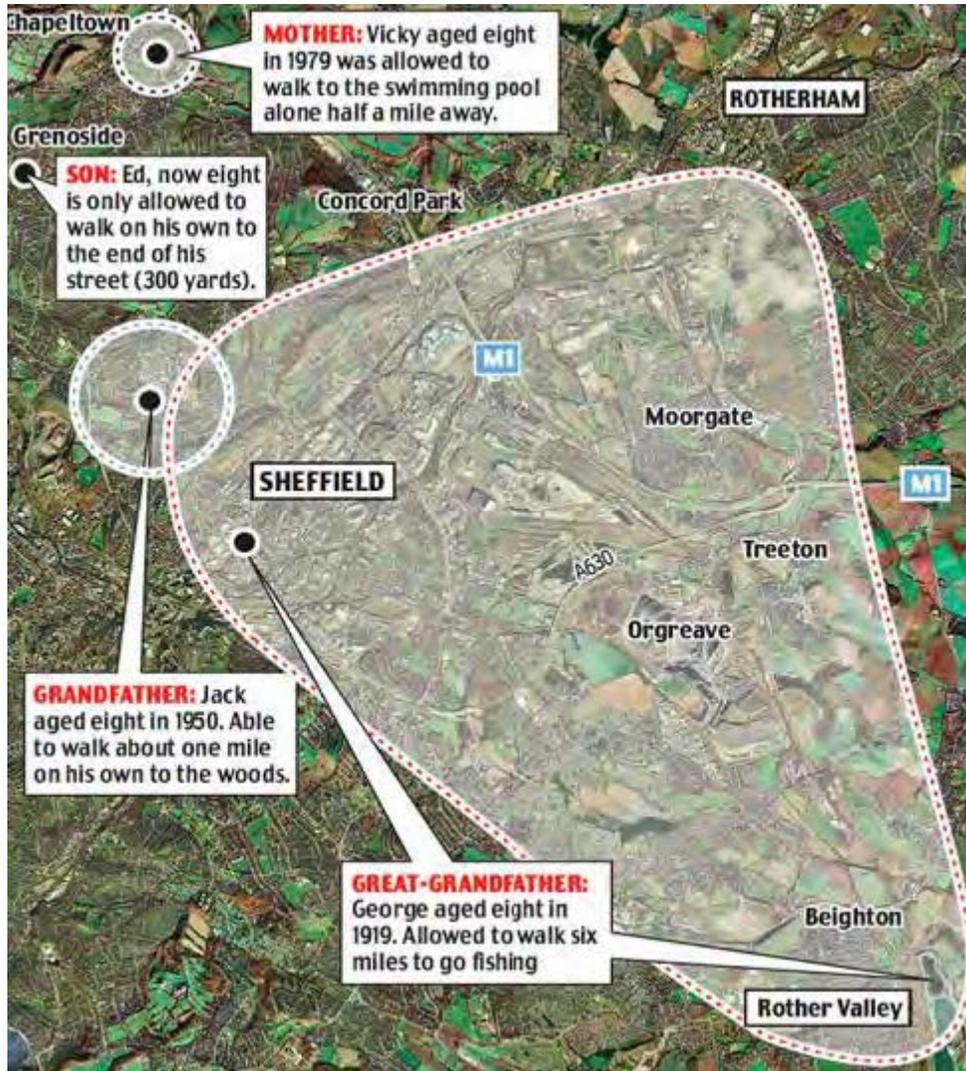
Dan shared photos and stories from his work throughout the country. His message is: build the right patterns, require the right codes, call a halt to nonsense and realize you have design options.

Looking ahead, Dan emphasized the changes that will be occurring in America in the coming years. In the past, we have focused on planning for cars and traffic, which has inevitably produced more cars and traffic. In the future, creative minds will be attracted to communities that focus on livability, quality of life trails, walking, and people. Dan was propelled to action early in his life after reading John Steinbeck's "Travels with Charley," in which Steinbeck observes that America is out of sync with its values. As an example of that, Dan cited a survey conducted in 2007 that showed fuel efficiency in cars to be number 17 on the list of priorities for Americans buying cars, with cup holders registering a higher priority.

Using his 5-year-old grandson as an example – Jack bikes two miles to school every day – Dan underscored the importance of how we raise the next generation. Citing health care cost statistics comparing the U.S. to other nations, he points out that the current situation is unsustainable and suggests the answer is at our feet – literally. Getting back to walking and biking will go a long way toward solving health care issues.

Quoting from Humboldt and Jefferson, Dan made the point that happiness depends more on the way we meet the events of life than on the nature of those events. We have a duty to inform people in order to make democracy work properly. The younger generation is looking for places to live that have active transportation and placemaking. Successful real estate developers are recognizing this and designing for the upcoming generation. All cities have been designed around transportation and the best ones support every age range. Dan shared the following graphic comparing the range that each of the past four generations had to roam as children;

it has shrunk from 6 miles to 300 yards in just a century. Providing for both ends of the age spectrum in community design is the best way to contain health care costs going forward.



Another graphic showed why we cannot build our way out of congestion. During the 20 highest growth years in America, we increased new highways by 2% as vehicle miles of travel (VMT) increased more than 70%. The good news is that, in the last few years, the increase in VMT appears to be on a slower trajectory.

A Complete Street Policy at the local level is necessary to begin providing for all modes of transportation. Such a policy is a key building block in a livable community. Cities make money through exchange – goods, culture, friendship, knowledge and minimizing travel. By showing contrasting types of collector streets, Dan emphasized the importance of getting design right – low speed, green, and lush parks internal to developments. He suggests building streets for people, not traffic. He cited multiples cities where this approach – build for people, not cars – has

resulted in increased sales by adjacent businesses, increased lease values, increased people on the street. Studies show that 85% of homebuyers want walkable communities, interaction with the environment through natural open spaces and paths, and are willing to pay more for these amenities. A study by the North Carolina Department of Transportation showed 43% of visitors reported bicycling as an important factor in selecting an area for vacationing and 53% cited it as a reason to return.

Dan wrapped up his talk by encouraging all of us to make walking the easy choice by changing the incentives. Using a new barometer to measure the success of streets means putting in more of the things you want – places to walk, bike, recreate, people-watch – and less of the things you don't want – traffic congestion and delays.

The principles of active transportation are:

- Well-connected
- Building orientation
- Proper street type, speed
- People-first design
- Good links and transit
- Pass it on to the next generation

Breakout Sessions

Session 1

Trails Master Plan with Dan Burden

Participants joined keynote speaker Dan Burden and Ken Simms, Senior Transportation Planner of the Regional Transportation Planning Office, to talk about possible ways to encourage our elected officials to approve and undertake the current proposed Urban Trails Master Plan. Together they discussed how the plan could be implemented and how citizens could encourage and work with municipalities to meet the goals of the UTMP.

Recreation & Trails: How Businesses Benefit

Recreation and trail events bring in participants from outside Grand Junction, providing revenue from the outside and positive exposure of the area, said Barbara Bowman, Division Manager, of the Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB). Most of the events source from local businesses when they can. These events are going to go somewhere, so our area should capitalize on them, said Chip Barbieri, CEO, DT Swiss.



It's important to quantify the value added to the community from the Riverfront Trail. It's a selling point for real estate. Research shows that open spaces increase real estate values in Colorado and add to the vibrancy of the community. A trail intercept study might be useful, as would reviewing trail studies from other areas, such as the Highline Trail in Denver.

Mike Heaston, CEO of Event Marketing Group, noted that racers and recreational participants have different economic impacts. Generally, racers don't spend as much as recreational trail users. There's not necessarily an immediate return on investment, but is often a long-term return. For example, the USA Pro Cycling event is a great PR opportunity, but it will take years to realize the economic gains from hosting it. The majority of the events are homegrown, but we're starting to see more interest from outside the Valley. However, the majority of participants in the large events come from elsewhere, bringing in outside money. Participants discussed the idea of investing the economic gains realized from recreational events back into recreational opportunities.

Monument Road Vision Project

The goal of the Monument Road Vision Project is to build a vision and community support for the Monument Road Corridor. By holding open houses, presenting maps, and hosting an interactive website, the Mesa Land Trust hopes to catalyze advocacy

for conservation, increased connectivity of trails, and protection of other recreation opportunities in the area. Rob Bleiberg and Libby Collins of the Mesa Land Trust asked session participants for input on what was important to them along the Monument Road corridor. Participants mentioned and discussed the following: safer connections with the Riverfront Trail, safer sidewalks, making kids and families feel safe on the road, off-road bike path, pedestrian/bicycle crossings on Monument Road, maintenance of existing shoulders/bike lanes and future paved trails, sustainable designs in case of floods, high speed limits should be addressed, handicap accessibility, connections to Colorado National Monument, and protection of remaining open space. The input from this session will be used in the planning process. Once a vision is developed, there will be a public comment process.



Safe Routes to School

The primary barriers to getting more children walking and biking to and from school included: parents' time; inconvenience; attitudes and perceptions; children's highly structured days; infrastructure/built environment with highways and major roads between homes and schools; lack of school and school district support; policy and budget; weather; school district attendance boundaries; school location; and lack of complete streets.

Possible strategies to overcome safety issues and perceptions included: leading by example and addressing perceptions; education on road safety skills; holding assemblies for parents and children on safety issues and concerns; safety-in-numbers through walking school buses and bicycle trains; neighborhood kid watch/flyers/door-to-door notice; holding a bike rodeo in the fall to begin the school year with refresher education; integrating bikes into all subjects; helmet fundraiser to improve access to helmets; getting the word out that test scores improve with increased physical activity among children; providing statistics regarding student safety and health benefits to parents; identifying and prioritizing crosswalks/flashing beacons; making it easier to walk than to drive; stopping traffic through school zones.

Potential partnerships and resources to engage or employ these strategies include: local government money and commitment; PTO/PTA fundraising and reinvigorating energy and interest; bike advocates and advisory committees; bike shops; service clubs; older students; adopt-a-school programs; empowering neighbors to watch for kids; holding assemblies to garner volunteers; support from police, school district, CDOT, City and County.

Session 2

Building a Livable Community with Dan Burden

Where are we going and how do we get there? These were the big questions addressed by this breakout session. Participants brainstormed with keynote speaker Dan Burden, Grand Junction City Transportation Engineer Jody Kliska, and Mesa County Traffic Engineer Jim Nall about how to move beyond the planning stage, so we have more and improved trails, bikes lanes and sidewalks here in the Grand Valley. Dan suggested on working on one or two core areas, such as downtown Grand Junction or the University neighborhood and building on successes there to showcase what livable looks like in our community,

Bike to Work Day/Month Planning

Participants brainstormed ideas for June as Bike to Work Month and Bike to Work Day. Ideas for Bike to Work Day included: breakfast locations at Palisade, Fruita, GJ City Hall, CMU, and Horizon Drive; emulate Health Department's group ride; regional rides with nodes; interactive map with suggested routes and on-line sign up; after-work activities; lunch events; progressive bike ride; bike with local officials. Ideas for a Commuter Challenge included: weekly seminars throughout June; challenge among major employers; encourage riding with a buddy; utilize "meet up group" through the Health Department; family-oriented weekend bike event; involve CMU outdoor club; hold a bike swap.

Ideas for outreach and logistics included: posters; e-mail blasts; social media; website using the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) site as model; tag-line; enticing small businesses and individuals; ambassadors—make a commitment/pledge; send information to bike shops and foster competition among them; outreach to bike groups; find a few significant sponsors; giveaway pant leg straps, T-shirts, gift cards.



Trail Opportunities and Challenges

Participants reiterated the desire to use the canals and drainages as an integral part of the trails network and the need to complete the Riverfront Trail corridor. There are many areas of the Valley that lack connectivity and infrastructure to safely walk and bike including: Highway 340, Palisade's Highway 6 Colorado River bridge, Orchard Mesa, Monument Road and South Camp Road, 25 ½ Road at G Road, the crossing of Riverfront Trail at 29 Road, South Broadway, 24 Road and Patterson, Gunnison Avenue adjacent to Lincoln Park golf course, and Walnut Street east of 1st Street. The upcoming 2040 Transportation Plan process will be a good opportunity to list needs and priorities.

Workplace Wellness

Participants expressed an understanding of the benefits and value of worksite wellness programs. The group discussed how to start such a program. Points covered included that the program doesn't have to be comprehensive or policy-based; it's important to get support from senior leadership; and the formation of a wellness committee can help with creation of ideas and resources.

Some simple ideas for offering wellness activities at work included the following:

- Book clubs/exchanges for healthy books, articles
- Use events that are already occurring in the community (hikes, walks, 5k events, etc.)
- Coordinate “work sponsored” activities on weekends and evenings so families can participate
- Meet-up groups
- Walking maps with distances and safe routes near workplace
- Walking meetings

The group also discussed ideas for incentives and agreed that even small incentives are motivating to employees. Ideas included T-shirts, paid team 5k registrations, fitness equipment and allowing flexible schedules to encourage exercise.



Conclusion

The 2013 Walking and Biking Trails Summit was considered by organizers and participants alike to be an exciting success. Not only did the event shed a light on the many benefits of well-developed trail system; more importantly, it demonstrated the Grand Valley's overwhelming support for an infrastructure which encourages walking and biking. Indeed, the Summit capitalized on a growing sentiment in our community, one that is tending toward offering more access to outdoor recreation, active transportation, and forward-thinking community design.

The true measure of this event, however, is not simply how inspired people are as they walk out the door. Rather, the success of the Walking and Biking Trails Summit depends on how sustained that motivation is a week, month, or even year later. The Summit has helped to support and bring attention to advocacy for better, smarter infrastructure as well as active transportation, and it is for this reason that it may rightly be called a success.

Shortly after the Summit, Mesa County's traffic engineer requested input from members of the Summit Team specific to upcoming county infrastructure projects. The Summit Team provided input that resulted in the completion of a county road project that was very favorable for pedestrians and bicyclists. Other notable post-Summit achievements include:

- Mesa County's most successful Bike-to-Work month and day yet in June 2013
- Significant community interest and input in the Grand Valley Trails Master Plan
- Successful program implementation and expansion by Grand Valley Bikes/Safe Routes to School and Grand Junction Shares the Road
- Growing collaboration within the Healthy Mesa County Built Environment Action Team

Without question, there is plenty of work left to do. As Dan Burden pointed out, we must work tirelessly to reverse years of planning for cars and traffic, rather than for people and places. Still, the Summit was an encouraging sign that the Grand Valley's vision for itself and its future is changing, to include more access to the beautiful landscapes that surround us.

Another Walking and Biking Trails Summit is planned for early 2015. Stay tuned at www.trailsummit.com for more information.