

# Hear Every Voice

## Case Study: Bloomington Xcel Energy Corridor Trail Health Impact Assessment



Conducted assessment of health impacts of proposed trail located in power line corridor

Bloomington, Minnesota

City of Bloomington, Design for Health (technical assistance provider), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (funder), Bauer & Associates (consultant)

**Context:** The City of Bloomington is a suburban community of about 83,000, according to the most recent Census. In the process of developing its Alternative Transportation Plan, the City of Bloomington conducted a participatory health impact assessment (HIA), often called a rapid health impact assessment, of one of the proposed recreational trail corridors identified in the plan. HIA, a tool that communities and organizations are using to assess the human and community health impacts of plans and projects, has only recently achieved wide use in the U.S. (Design for Health 2011).

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota provided funding to the City of Bloomington for work on the Alternative Transportation Plan and separately to Design for Health as part of a broader effort to build capacity in communities to address health in local plans and policies. Design for Health worked with a number of communities in conducting HIAs. The City of Bloomington focused its HIA on a proposed Xcel trail corridor that runs north-south in an existing power line corridor in the eastern portion of the city. The Xcel trail corridor is planned as part of a larger bicycle and pedestrian transportation system. The HIA assessed potential health impacts and obstacles and was used to assess support for including the Xcel trail corridor in the Alternative Transportation Plan (City of Bloomington 2008).

**Public Involvement:** In the process of preparing its Alternative Transportation Plan, the City of Bloomington convened a task force consisting of city staff from multiple departments (e.g. planning, public works, parks and recreation, police, public health), local business owners, school district staff, and elected officials. This task force provided oversight related to the plan. They also served as working group for the HIA, participating in a two-hour interactive HIA workshop at one of its meetings. The session was facilitated by City of Bloomington Public Health staff, with preliminary assistance provided by Design for Health in developing the workshop agenda and materials.

As documented in the Alternative Transportation Plan (City of Bloomington 2008), the workshop was structured to provide background information on the proposed trail corridor, including existing conditions and the proposed location and features. The facilitators also introduced the concept of HIA and identified potential categories of health impacts, such as safety, accessibility, and air quality. Building on that information, workshop facilitators engaged the participants in a warm-up discussion that asked them to identify their

### Project Details

### Location

### Organizations

### Case Summary

definition of health. The group then brainstormed potential health impacts of the trail corridor, challenges to successful implementation, and possible enhancements that could maximize the positive health impacts. The group used Post-it notes to generate an initial set of individual ideas and post them at the front of the room.

Images show active engagement of participants in the HIA workshop and approaches to documenting feedback provided during the discussion



Source: Carissa Schively Slotterback

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Following completion of the HIA participatory workshop, the Bloomington Advisory Board of Health— consisting of health care providers and consumers—also reviewed the workshop findings. They identified additional health benefits that expanded beyond the discussion outcomes from the workshop (City of Bloomington 2008).

*“Overall, the use of this tool proved valuable in shaping the discussion and providing another set of findings in support of the alternative transportation plan described in this document”  
(City of Bloomington 2008, 1.8).*

**Outcomes:** The City of Bloomington took the somewhat uncommon approach of fully documenting the results of the HIA workshop outcomes in the Alternative Transportation Plan. While many communities or organizations might summarize the findings and perhaps even publish them, it is notable that details from the workshop discussion are included in the plan (City of Bloomington 2008, 1.7).

City of Bloomington. 2008. Alternative Transportation Plan. Retrieved from: [http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/commdev/planning/longrang/alttranplan/atp\\_final.htm](http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/commdev/planning/longrang/alttranplan/atp_final.htm) (accessed July 15, 2011)

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**Note:** Case study author, Schively Slotterback was part of the Design for Health team that assisted the City of Bloomington with the Xcel Corridor HIA.

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## References

## Resources