



# HEALTHY COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

City of Ontario



# HOW DOES TRANSPORTATION AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?

The transportation options available to you affect your ability to access employment, medical care, and shopping. Direct, safe, and affordable options can increase your quality of life by reducing the amount you spend on transportation, increasing access to job opportunities, and freeing up time for other important pursuits. Further, people who walk and bike to their destinations receive a direct health benefit from increased physical activity. Your community's investment in active transportation (i.e., walking, biking, taking the bus) infrastructure and programs can help you lead a healthy lifestyle and lead to positive outcomes for you and for all of Ontario.

This healthy community impact assessment describes Ontario's health-related transportation barriers and opportunities to overcome these challenges:

- **1** THE ABILITY TO WALK, BIKE, AND TAKE TRANSIT
- **2** SAFE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WALKING AND BIKING
- **3** ACCESS TO HEALTH-SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES
- **4** ACCESS TO JOBS AND SCHOOLS
- **5** COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY
- **6** AIR QUALITY

# 1

## THE ABILITY TO WALK, BIKE, AND TAKE TRANSIT

### CHALLENGES

- Only 35% of roads in Ontario have a complete sidewalk on both sides of the road
- In a community survey, 35% of respondents said that a lack of public transit availability in Ontario was their top transportation concern (2020 Ontario Region Community Health Needs Assessment)
- SW Fifth Avenue, one of two roadway connections across I-84, has no sidewalks and only a narrow shoulder on the bridge over the freeway



### OPPORTUNITIES

- The City recently completed a walking and biking path near Treasure Valley Community College, and it plans to build one along the Snake River, as well
- Explore funding opportunities to increase the frequency and coverage of bus routes
- Improve the visibility of existing bus stops within Ontario

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to U.S. Census data, 28% of residents in Ontario are under the age of 18<sup>1</sup>
- More than 53% of all occupied housing units in Ontario either do not have access to a vehicle or have access to only one vehicle<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ACS 5-year 2014-2018  
<sup>2</sup> ACS 5-year 2014-2018

# 2

## SAFE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WALKING AND BIKING

### CHALLENGES

- There are few connected sidewalks in residential neighborhoods, which make it difficult for people to walk from their homes to locations across Ontario
- Low-income housing areas, especially south of SW Fourth Avenue, have very few sidewalks within the immediate neighborhoods or connecting to the rest of Ontario
- There are few low-stress bike routes connecting Ontario residents to jobs, services, and shopping opportunities

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Schools provide an opportunity to incorporate walking and biking into lessons about living a healthier lifestyle
- Identify and prioritize sidewalk gaps
- Identify priority bicycle connections and plan for improvements that will serve a wide range of ages and abilities

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to the Malheur County Health Department, 90% of public-school students ride the bus to and from school





# 3

## ACCESS TO HEALTH-SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES

### CHALLENGES

- According to the St. Alphonsus 2020 Ontario Region Community Health Needs Assessment, affordable, safe housing and financial stability are the top two community health needs for Ontario
- 18% of community respondents say that a lack of transportation has made it more difficult to get health and social services
- There are numerous grocery stores in Ontario, but reaching these stores without a car is challenging with few connected sidewalks
- Specialty appointments in communities outside of Ontario can be a challenge for people to reach by any means other than a personal vehicle

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Since 2018, Ontario has been a community hub for OHSU's Nutrition Oregon Campaign, which is addressing food insecurity locally to drive down rates of chronic disease
- Prioritize improvements on routes that provide access to health-supportive services, including medical facilities and grocery stores

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2020 County Health Rankings Report, there are nine primary care doctors in Malheur County, or 3,387 residents per every doctor, the second-worst ratio in the state of Oregon
- Healthy behaviors are the single largest predictor of health outcomes<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/what-makes-us-healthy-vs-what-we-spend-on-being-healthy/>

# 4

## ACCESS TO JOBS AND SCHOOLS

### CHALLENGES

- The fastest-growing commercial areas in Ontario are on E Idaho Avenue to the east of I-84, while the majority of residents in Ontario live on the west side of I-84 and the railroad tracks
  - » There are only two roads that cross both I-84 and the railroad tracks that connect these two areas of Ontario
- SW Fourth Avenue is a five-lane thoroughfare with grocery stores, the hospital, parks, and numerous other businesses, yet there are few marked crosswalks for people needing to cross the street
- Several schools, including Alameda Elementary, May Roberts Elementary, and Ontario High, have limited sidewalk coverage at or immediately surrounding the schools
- Malheur County's minimum wage is \$11.50 an hour, while Idaho's minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour, meaning that there is increased competition for jobs in Ontario from Idaho residents, who will likely be driving to get to work

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Providing enhanced crossings, such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons, one of which is located on SW Fourth Avenue across from St. Alphonsus Medical Center, can alert drivers to people needing to cross the street away from a stoplight
- Prioritize improvements on routes to schools and employment areas

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to the Oregon Health Authority, 6.6% of Malheur County residents walk, bike, or take transit to get to work

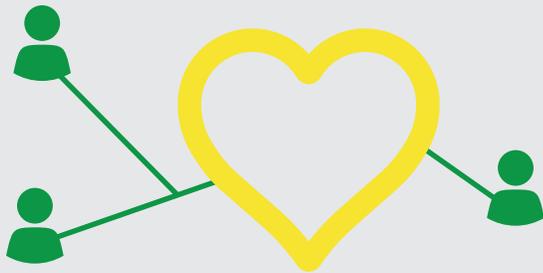


# 5

## COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

### CHALLENGES

- Ontario has a population around 11,000 people, but upwards of 50,000 people are in or traveling through the city on any given day, putting a strain on the transportation system
- The median income for a family of four in Malheur County is 19% below the basic survival budget to afford food, housing, childcare, healthcare, and transportation costs
- As Ontario's Hispanic population rises, income disparities are increasingly pronounced: according to the Malheur County Health Department, a single Hispanic mom's median income is \$16,000.



### OPPORTUNITIES

- The COVID-19 crisis is leading to new partnerships between the City of Ontario and the Malheur County Health Department – formalizing such partnerships and adding new organizations (such as ODOT) in non-crisis times can improve community health and active transportation outcomes
- Identify potential funding opportunities to take advantage of the relatively high commercial activity that occurs in Ontario

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Nearly 45% of the population in Ontario is Hispanic or Latino as of 2018, compared with 32% of the city's population in 2000<sup>1</sup>

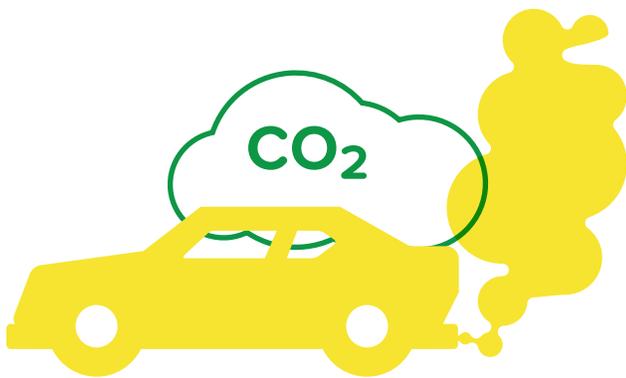
<sup>1</sup> ACS 5-year 2014-2018, Census 2000

# 6

## AIR QUALITY

### CHALLENGES

- Air pollution is a problem in Ontario, driven by inversions and industrial/agricultural outputs
- 76% of residents in the county drive alone to work



### OPPORTUNITIES

- Increasing walking, biking, and public transportation use can lower vehicle-related emissions

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2020 County Health Rankings Report, Malheur County ranks 34th out of 35 participating counties in Oregon for the "Physical Environment" health factor, which includes air & water quality and housing & transit