

Advancing Bicycling for All: Perceptions of Active Transportation in White Center, Washington

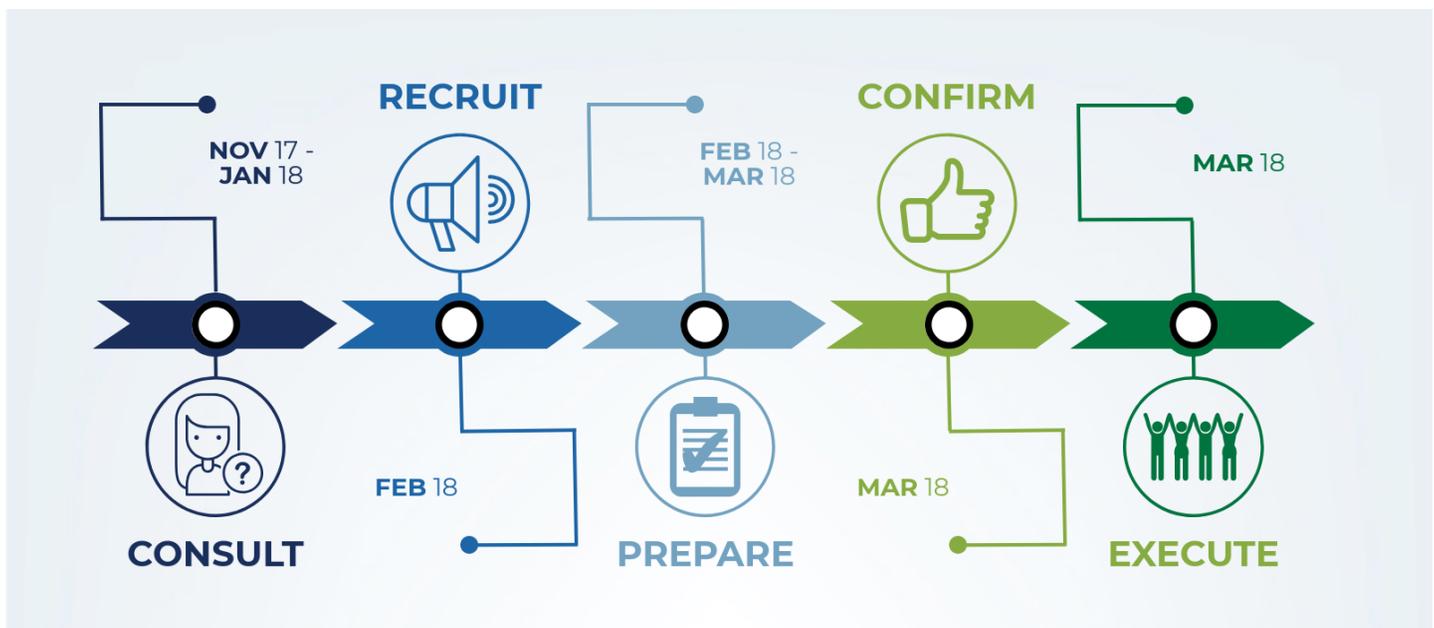
JUNE 2018

Background

Certain communities are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to healthy built environments and access to opportunities for engaging in active transportation. To meet communities where they are and best address their priorities and needs, Cascade sought to first understand priorities and needs among populations who are historically underserved due to racial composition, economic status or otherwise. This project entailed conducting a community needs assessment to learn about perceptions related to active transportation and neighborhood traffic safety in White Center, Washington.

Methods

As non-residents with limited knowledge of White Center, we began this project by consulting community leaders for ideas around engaging community members appropriately and effectively. We conducted five focus groups (48 total adults) in four languages. We asked participants to identify reasons why they bike and walk, barriers and facilitators to active transportation, and ways to advance community-led advocacy on these issues.



Key Findings

The reasons for engaging in walking and/or biking most frequently revolve around **recreation**. This is significant because it indicates participants are most concerned about having safe, accessible spaces for exercising and being physically active with their family members and friends. Across all groups, the most prominent barriers to active transportation centered on **concerns about neighborhood safety and driver behavior**, though clear differences exist in the themes extracted from English and non-English groups. While infrastructural enhancements, bike-centric programming and education were all cited as catalysts, the feeling of personal safety serves as a baseline facilitator.

Conclusion

Partners looking to advance accessibility of biking and walking for all must actively address neighborhood and traffic safety in tandem with built environment changes. This assessment is just one component of a broader ongoing process to encourage greater rates of walking and biking. Through actively seeking to hear directly from community members, Cascade is better-equipped to understand what changes represent the priorities and needs of people in White Center.

Recommendations

POLICY

- ✓ Pursue partnerships with local government officials to bring them into the conversation.
- ✓ Advocate for infrastructural improvements that enhance overall neighborhood and traffic safety.
- ✓ When advocating for bike-friendly roads, also push for the construction of safe, accessible bike parking and storage.
- ✓ Tailor and adapt advocacy activities to make them accessible and welcoming to diverse community members.
- ✓ Partner with local organizations like the CDA to ensure work is culturally appropriate and representative of community wants and needs.
- ✓ Move ahead with conducting advocacy and leadership training with White Center community members.

EDUCATION

- ✓ Continue to seek out opportunities to partner with local schools around bike education, specifically through using the bike playground.
- ✓ Tailor and adapt education and outreach activities so they are accessible and welcoming to diverse community members.
- ✓ Partner with organizations like the CDA to develop programming promoting active transportation for people from diverse cultural backgrounds and life stages.
- ✓ Host community events and/or campaigns to further promote bike safety for cyclists and drivers.