



## Lincoln In Motion Supports Active Living

By Barbara Fraser, RD, MS; Co-Chair, Lincoln in Motion

Our nation is facing an epidemic of physical inactivity. Although there has been much discussion about exercise and physical activity for over 15 years, personal behaviors are not changing much. We need to do something in addition to the individual behavior change programs to make it easier for persons to be more active.

This is where Lincoln in Motion and its various member organizations can impact change. As a group of organizations and individuals, we can address physical activity on multiple levels. Lincoln in Motion supports Active Living as a goal for our community residents.

Active Living is a way of life that mixes physical activity into daily routines to improve health. The goal is to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity each day through a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling for transportation, playing in the park, working in the yard, taking the stairs and using recreational facilities.

Yet many of us lead an inactive lifestyle. A lot of work is now done by machine and we use the automobile for travel, even for short trips. We don't walk or bike as much as we used to, partly because our communities have been designed for the automobile. This can make it uncomfortable or dangerous for those on foot or on bicycles.

In order to achieve this goal of active living, we may need to change our culture, our policies, and the Lincoln environment so that active living is the easier, safer, more convenient and fun choice.

Tom Golaszewski, a researcher in New York, speaks of a "Chameleon Theory" that states: People will change their behavior to reflect their environments. If you want healthy people, create healthy environments. In other words, we need to go from just giving swimming lessons to building swimming pools. Rather than just telling persons to walk, we need to build more sidewalks and ensure that they connect with other sidewalks and lead to destinations.

We may need to take a look at the way our community is designed and make some changes to encourage routine physical activity like walking and bicycling. Connections between sidewalks and trails are important, as are a mix of land use, enhanced safety, and site design that is supportive of walking. Engineering can make a difference in how safely we can walk or bike. Research has shown that

accident and fatality rates are decreased when there are **more** people walking or biking.

According to Jim Sallis, Ph.D. at San Diego State University, an average 150 pound person living in an activity-friendly environment could prevent weight gain of 0.85 to 1.75 pounds per year, which is near the average adult weight gain in the U.S. A Rodale Press Survey indicated that 46% of Americans would walk or bike to work or for errands if they only had facilities that were "safe and convenient." A recent (2006) study in King County, Washington, found that people who live in neighborhoods that are more walkable tended to be less overweight and were more likely to reach the Surgeon General's Health Goal of at least 30 minutes of activity on a daily basis.

Planning, transportation, health, housing, recreation, and economic development officials make decisions every day that affect our community access to active living.

Lincoln in Motion works to make improvements in physical activity as it:

- Encourages individuals and communities to adopt healthy behaviors through education

- Supports public policy that fosters active living

- Promotes and develops community partnerships

- Encourages social and environmental change to increase opportunities for physical activity.

Here are some current efforts that relate to Lincoln in Motion goals:

**Promote and support the programs and events of Lincoln organizations:** The Lincoln in Motion website, [www.lincolninmotion.org](http://www.lincolninmotion.org) currently hosts a calendar of activities, programs and events that community members may choose to take part in to boost their physical activity. Lincoln in Motion has devoted support to community events. Look for the banner across Lincoln.

**Safe Routes to School (SR2S):** As part of the recent federal transportation funding bill, Nebraska will receive \$1 million/year for up to 5 years for SR2S. The purpose of the program is: to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make walking and bicycling to school safe and more appealing; and to implement projects that will improve safety, and

reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution near schools.

Lincoln has been working with local schools to encourage walking and bicycling to school. Part of this work includes walking school buses, where children are walked to school with an adult to help ensure their safety. An interdisciplinary group of health, planning, public works, parks and recreation, and education is working to plan for application to SR2S funding to boost these efforts.

**Pedestrian Standards** have recently been approved by the Planning Commission and presented to the City Council. These standards would promote sidewalks in commercial areas that support walking access; parking lot design that considers the comfort and safety of pedestrians; bike racks in convenient locations; and designing development for future transit options. Such standards or zoning decisions make a very concrete difference in how walkable or bikeable our community is and will be in the future.

**Legislative Bill 681** is a bill that was introduced by Senator Dianna Schimek in 2005 and is currently held in the Education Committee. This bill would require daily physical education in grades K-8 in public schools in Nebraska. It is strongly supported by the American Heart Association and numerous other health groups and individuals. Childhood obesity is of great concern and if we don't act on this trend, this could be the first generation of American children who will live sicker and die sooner than the generation that came before them.

**Countdown Pedestrian Timers:** A number of pedestrian signals have recently been purchased for the City with grant money from the NE Department of Health and Human Services, through the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. These pedestrian signals are unique in that they provide a countdown timer to let the person crossing know how much time is allowed for street crossing. These countdown timers, as well as many others purchased by the City, are being strategically placed throughout the City to assist children in safely crossing on their way to school and other locations to enhance pedestrian safety.

### What can you do?

You can act as an Active Living example. Try to find more ways to walk or bike instead of drive the car for transportation. Do this with your

family.

Speak out. Let your opinions be known to the Planning Commission and the City Council and the State Legislature on proposed developments and new regulations. Consider whether waiving sidewalks may be harmful to the health of our community. Look for ways that our city can be more activity-friendly.

Become involved yourself. Seek out positions on local boards that make decisions impacting physical activity in our community: schools, parks, trails, planning, City Council, etc.

Join with Lincoln in Motion as we seek to create a healthier Lincoln through the support and promotion of physical activity throughout the lifespan.

If we are successful, this is our vision of Lincoln in Motion:

Physical activity is the easy choice.

All streets and highways include good provisions for bicycling and walking. It is easy for pedestrians -- including children -- to cross the street safely.

Communities and neighborhoods are planned and built with mixed land use, active downtowns and main streets, and shorter trip lengths for routine trips (such as going to school, to shop, or even to work).

Sidewalks and trails and bike paths are connected so that people may use these routes for transportation.

People walk and bike regularly. Most short trips are made on foot or by bike; transit and motor vehicles are used primarily for longer trips.

There are people outside much of the time. People feel secure; crime rates are very low.

Most children walk or bike to school, to visit friends, and to get to local parks and recreation facilities.

Most people can walk or bike to local park and recreation facilities, the post office, and the library.

Physical activity levels are high for people of all ages and abilities, and people are healthier. Children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity everyday and adults get at least 30 minutes of physical activity everyday.

Active Living is a part of daily life and the culture of Lincoln.

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# LINCOLN IN MOTION

**Get Moving!  
Get Healthy!**

Regular physical activity helps to prevent illness and improves the overall quality of life. That is why Lincoln's Physical Activity Council is working to get **LINCOLN IN MOTION!**

**LINCOLN IN MOTION** can help you achieve a healthier lifestyle. Check out our website for more information on our vision statement, **LINCOLN IN MOTION** partners, sponsorship opportunities, promotional tools, and a schedule of events.

[www.lincolninmotion.org](http://www.lincolninmotion.org)