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# Creating and Sustaining a Healthy Worksite Culture

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Through Active Transportation

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Healthy Active Oregon Institute

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Benton County Health Department

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# Why Policy and Environmental?

Policy and environmental supports change the norms and culture of the worksite, leading to wellness interventions that are:

- Cost effective
  - Sustainable
  - Supportive of healthy choices
  - Easier to enforce
  - Less affected by management change
  - Applicable to everyone
  - Encourages employees to be active at work and at home
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# Increasing Physical Activity

***“Just 30 minutes of physical activity taken regularly will benefit the health of everyone”*** Donna E. Shalala, US Surgeon General, 1996



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# Active Transportation

- Only one quarter of Americans currently achieve the recommended physical activity levels.
  - Using active modes of transportation like walking and biking can help meet the recommendation.
  - Many adults spend 20, 30, or 40 hours or more a week at work. Adding physical activity to employees' workdays may be one way to help working Americans become healthier.
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# Research on Health Impacts

- Commute time correlates highly with obesity.
  - Each additional hour spent in a car per day is associated with a 6% increase in the risk of obesity.
  - Public transit patrons tend to get more exercise.
  - People are more likely to exercise if it is incorporated into their day.
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# Active Transportation Benefits to Employers

- Less expensive and more feasible than building fitness centers
  - Multiple health benefits to employers and corresponding health benefit costs
  - Increase in employee productivity and absenteeism
  - Lower auto fleet costs – gas and maintenance
  - Replaces purchasing new vehicles
  - May save travel time in urban areas
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# Action Steps for Policy and Environmental Change

1. Identify inside advocate(s)
  2. Secure support from top administrator and senior management
  3. Collaborate with existing worksite wellness coalitions or create new one
  4. Survey employees
  5. Set goals based on survey
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**Benton County Commissioner, Linda Modrell, with her Pedometer**

# Health Status of Benton County Employees

## ■ Risk Factors

Overweight	81%	overweight or obese
Low nutritional status	57%	as measured by health assessment
Lack of physical activity	42%	do not meet recommendation
Smoking	7%	

## ■ Chronic Conditions

High Cholesterol	17.5%
Hypertension	14%
Asthma	16%
Diabetes	5%

## ■ Healthcare Claims per month

Average Employee	\$226
Employee with	
High Cholesterol	\$406
Diabetes	\$540
Hypertension	\$482

## ■ Age

55% of employees are 45 years or older  
20 percent are within 10 years of retirement age



Public Works Employees

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# Benton County Worksite Wellness Background

- Benefits and Wellness Committee
  - PAN Worksite Wellness Grant
  - Supportive Human Resource Director  
and Public Works/Transportation Director
  - Healthy Active Community Environments Taskforce  
and Marquee project funding
  - Transportation–demand Management and Employee  
Transportation Coordinator Group
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# Employee Bicycle Survey Results

## ■ Mode of Transportation

Single occupancy vehicle –	84%
Bicycle –	32%
Walk –	26%
Carpool –	7%
Ride the bus –	5%
Telecommuting –	1%
Vanpool –	0%

## ■ Commute Distance

Less than 1 mile	13%
1 to 5 miles	49%
6 to 10 miles	14%
More than 10 miles	24%

## ■ Suggestions that would make it more likely they would bike commute

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# Benton County Strategies for Policy

- Flex-time for physical activity
  - Motor-pool policy to include errand bicycles
  - Employee group bus pass
  - Emergency ride home policy
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Errand Bikes and Covered Bicycle Parking

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# Benton County Strategies for Environmental Supports

- Repaired employee bicycle cages
  - Built and installed covered bicycle racks at three county buildings
  - Purchased 6 errand bicycles
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Staff and Health Administrator doing Yoga

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# Strategies for Changing Worksite Cultural Norms

- Get there Another Way Week Campaign
  - Walking programs and incentives
  - Ping pong tables
  - Bicycle repair classes
  - OSU Dixon Recreation Center Employee Nights
  - Brown Bags
  - Employee Walking Guide and Healthy Meeting Guide
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# Other Ways to Promote Physical Activity in the Workplace

- Schedule physical activity breaks
  - Install workout facilities
  - Install showers and changing facilities
  - List of suggestions for physical activity on breaks
  - Offer discounts or subsidies for fitness clubs
  - Extra time allotted for physical activity
  - Organize employee walking clubs
  - Others?
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# Challenges

- Low usage of errand bicycle
  - Usual suspects participate
  - Employees unaware of group bus pass
  - Low current support from managers but in an ideal world they would support
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# Manager Survey

<b><i>Your Department's Current and Ideal Perceptions</i></b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Commitment to supporting healthy lifestyle	C-53% <i>I-97%</i>	C-47% <i>I-0%</i>
Wellness activities and events at the workplace are well received and personally attended	C-20% <i>I-80%</i>	C-60% <i>I-10%</i>
Coworkers support one another in efforts to adopt healthier lifestyle practices	C-83% <i>I-93%</i>	C-17% <i>I-3%</i>

<b><i>Your Department's Current and Ideal Perceptions</i></b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Flextime is used for physical activity	C-41% <i>I-86%</i>	C-45% <i>I-7%</i>
Healthy foods available at work-sponsored meetings	C-61% <i>I-94%</i>	C-36% <i>I-0%</i>
Healthy options are offered in vending machines and snack boxes	C-11% <i>I-71%</i>	C-71% <i>I-21%</i>
Employees ride personal/county bicycle for errands within 5-mile radius during work hours	C-18% <i>I-57%</i>	C-68% <i>I-21%</i>

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# Discussion

- What suggestions do you have?
  - What are your experiences?
  - What strategies have you used to overcome similar challenges?
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# Contact Information

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# Creating Cultural Shift

