

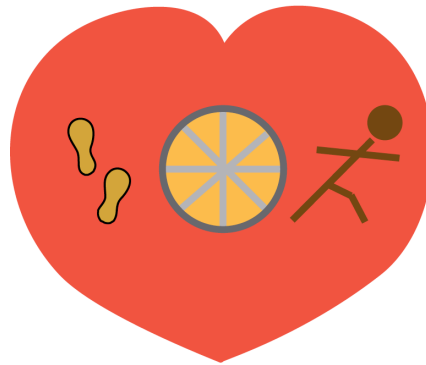
# ***Process and Results Summary***

**Relating to**

***Physical Activities and the Built Environment***

***Policy Initiative Grant***

GASTONIA BELMONT

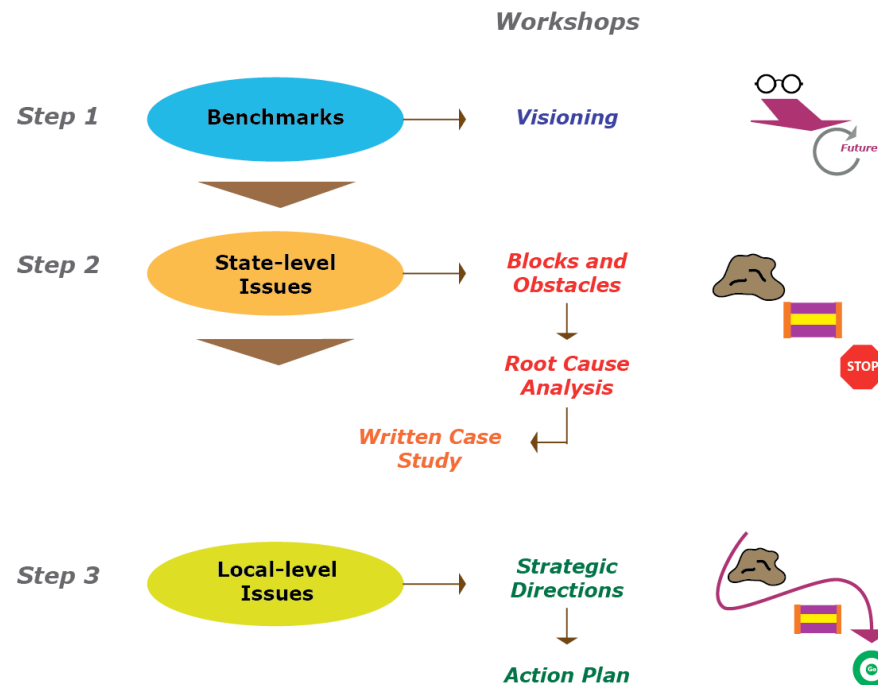


BESSEMER CITY

# Overview

This project attempts to identify policy conflicts, practices, procedures, barriers, and value issues that exist between state and local levels of government and interfere with promoting a healthy, built environment and active life styles in the cities of Gastonia–Belmont–Bessemer City. In short, *what's missing, interfering with, or not working for the three cities that prevent individuals and families from taking full advantage of a safe, comfortable, enjoyable, and healthy built environment within their communities?*

## Process Design



# Workshop Results

## Visioning Workshop

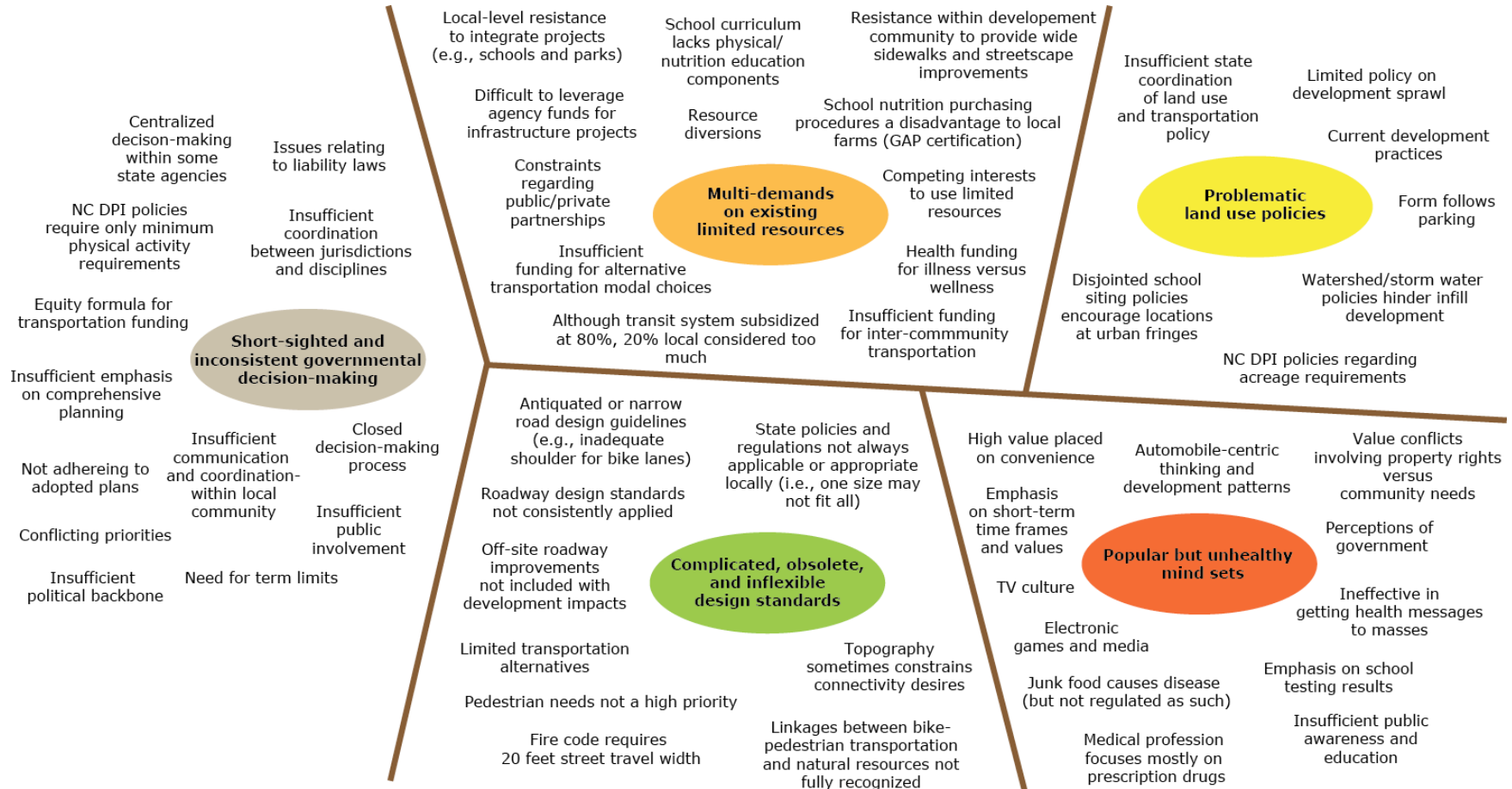
*What policies/initiatives/activities either indicate now, or once completed would indicate, that the Cities of Gastonia–Belmont–Bessemer City are successfully integrating physical activities with the built environment in ways that promote healthy environments and active life styles?*

### Building Healthy Communities by ...

Encouraging Walkable, Mixed-use Developments	Developing a Multi-modal Transportation System that Provides for Connectivity	Creating and Promoting Wellness and Sustainable, Healthy, Lifestyles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt form-based codes ... establish urban growth boundaries</li> <li>• Better maintain parks ... build more parks ... provide for pocket parks in neighborhoods ... require parks and common areas in developments</li> <li>• Build an aquatic center ... establish centralized senior centers</li> <li>• Improve coordination between communities</li> <li>• Incentivize redevelopment ... redevelop buildings to accommodate physical activities</li> <li>• Live–work–play locally ... make destinations more walkable ... people should live close to work, school, shopping, and parks ... build structures on a <i>human</i> scale ... encourage compact mixed development ... integrate residential-oriented businesses within neighborhoods</li> <li>• Make downtown areas more vibrant</li> <li>• Protect natural resources ... set aside natural assets to protect sensitive areas (greenprint process)</li> <li>• Provide for neighborhood, walkable schools ... schools should have playgrounds ... co-locate schools and parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop sidewalk plans for all neighborhoods ... construct more sidewalks ... better maintain existing sidewalks ... sidewalks should be both wide and part of an inter-connected system</li> <li>• Develop system of bike paths ... construct more bicycle lanes ... improve bike lane safety ... provide pedestrian/bicycle access between neighborhoods and work areas</li> <li>• Expand public transit system ... better link multi-modal transportation nodes ... improve bus stops</li> <li>• Expand the greenway system ... complete the Carolina Thread Trail</li> <li>• Implement <i>complete streets</i> ... make crosswalks more pedestrian-friendly ... utilize more <i>green strips</i> for safety ... shady street trees encourage walking</li> <li>• Improve connectivity of public transportation within and between communities ... incorporate many types/modes of transportation (i.e., walking, biking, and transit) ... link activity centers (i.e., parks, homes, and urban nodes)</li> <li>• Make schools and parks more accessible by both foot and bikes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow for public use of school recreational facilities during off-hours ... construct public walking tracks at schools ... provide summer day camp opportunities for children</li> <li>• Better promote all types of wellness ... promote healthy lifestyles ... start thinking of exercise as good medicine ... promote community nutrition programs ... provide for more diverse recreational opportunities ... ban smoking in all public places</li> <li>• Change general education curriculum to better emphasize importance of physical activities... increase physical education curriculum requirements ... improve school health programs</li> <li>• Create community gardens ... build gardens at schools and daycare facilities ... establish a farmers market that has easy access from neighborhoods</li> <li>• Encourage diversity in decision making</li> <li>• Have more festivals ... promote community activity programs</li> <li>• Incentivize physical activity within the workplace ... expand social networks</li> <li>• Make healthcare facilities more accessible by multi- modal transportation</li> <li>• Think safety ... slow traffic movement on local streets</li> </ul>

## Blocks and Obstacles Workshop

What state-level policies are not working, limit, or interfere with realization of our shared, multi-community vision?



## Root Cause Analyses Workshop

*Which blocks–obstacles would benefit from a closer look regarding state-level policies + what does a root cause analysis tell us about these blocks–obstacles?*

### 1 – Cost-sharing/Creative Funding

Problems/ Symptoms	Duration and Fault Tree Branch	Why Problem Exists	Change Options	Desired Commitment	What to Do ... How to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicting rules regarding distribution and use (i.e., when funds come from multiple sources)</li> <li>• Funding streams do not always align well with local needs</li> <li>• Greater costs if one does not do it</li> <li>• Lack of procedures for non-traditional fund transfers</li> <li>• Local political groups do not trust each other</li> <li>• Most state-level agencies operate vertically and lack horizontal integration outside their organizational hierarchy ... same is true for local-level departments</li> <li>• Much of existing funding has poor (or no) linkages to health needs</li> <li>• Required funding procedures often costly to administer</li> <li>• State-wide method of distributing funds</li> <li>• Time factor (e.g., length of time to complete project)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decades</li> <li>• Organizational and human</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness ... only now recognizing importance of linkages between built environment and health</li> <li>• Balancing local budgets is always difficult</li> <li>• Cultural norms change over time ... need to adapt, but time lag in updating rules and regulations</li> <li>• Differing goals and procedures <i>between</i> organizations and differing priorities <i>within</i> an organization or agency</li> <li>• Inertia is part of organizational culture</li> <li>• Issues regarding timing of fund allocation and use</li> <li>• Lack of incentives to address problem</li> <li>• Leadership attitudes</li> <li>• Limited amounts of funds for disbursement (i.e., not enough funding to satisfy needs)</li> <li>• Most decision-making is value-driven (e.g., differing agendas of both people and agencies)</li> <li>• Most municipalities have different needs at different points in time</li> <li>• Multiple reviewer levels</li> <li>• Not enough <i>big picture</i> thinking (at both state and local levels)</li> <li>• Politics</li> <li>• Poor collaboration involving complex issues and multiple organizations/agencies</li> <li>• Some issues are geographically unique in context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop governmental guidelines that require coordination of policy and funding to achieve <i>over-arching</i> goals</li> <li>• Start at top of leadership hierarchy</li> <li>• Celebrate success stories</li> <li>• Education that emphasizes importance of health issues</li> <li>• Provide greater flexibility to reviewers</li> <li>• Raise level of awareness (at grass roots level) within organizations about health-related issues</li> <li>• Develop health benefit analysis relating to projects ... add health impact analysis to project approval (at all levels of government) ... link funding decision to health impact assessment results</li> <li>• Look for <i>local</i> solutions (in addition to state/federal solutions) when making funding decisions</li> <li>• Decentralize state-level decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build support base (i.e., one where people place greater value on health)</li> <li>• Emphasize education and awareness</li> <li>• Fund pilot programs</li> <li>• Highlight success stories</li> <li>• Provide for <i>focused</i> funding options</li> <li>• Start at executive levels of government</li> <li>• Utilize funding targets (i.e., both agencies and users) to try/test new procedures</li> <li>• Work together ... talk with each other ... speak with one voice</li> </ul>

## 2 – NCDOT Design Standards

Problems/ Symptoms	Duration and Fault Tree Branch	Why Problem Exists	Change Options	Desired Commitment	What to Do ... How to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At local level some folks simply don't like rules of any type</li> <li>• Communication within organization often does not filter down to local levels</li> <li>• Disconnects between Raleigh offices and regional offices</li> <li>• Enforcement has limits</li> <li>• Information disconnects involving interpretation of standards</li> <li>• Liability issues hinder flexibility</li> <li>• NCDOT is a large organization with a huge mission (e.g., miles and number of roads)</li> <li>• One-size-fits-all standards limit flexibility</li> <li>• Original intent of some standards has been lost</li> <li>• Primary focus on vehicles (i.e., cars and trucks)</li> <li>• Several existing standards conflict with pedestrian-friendly streets</li> <li>• Significant inconsistencies between divisions</li> <li>• Some standards not being used locally</li> <li>• Times have changed ... but not mindsets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decades</li> <li>• Physical, organizational, and human</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in project prioritization</li> <li>• Engineering standards adapt slowly to governmental policy changes</li> <li>• Failure to develop <i>range</i> of solutions</li> <li>• Fear/reluctance to make exceptions or allow variations (because of anticipated negative feed-back within organization)</li> <li>• Large size of trucks</li> <li>• Limited flexibility</li> <li>• Little focus on pedestrian needs</li> <li>• Most agency funding comes from gasoline tax ... plus gasoline tax not sufficient to meet existing expenses</li> <li>• Petty lawsuits</li> <li>• Problematic land use and transportation linkages</li> <li>• Sidewalks are local ... but roads are state</li> <li>• State agencies often lack <i>big picture</i> thinking of local needs</li> <li>• Time lapses (e.g., personnel changes over long project time periods)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better integrate pedestrian-bicycle needs with road projects</li> <li>• Continue to emphasize that safety issues are important (e.g., driver education and enforcement)</li> <li>• Decentralize organizational decision-making</li> <li>• Develop more context-sensitive designs</li> <li>• Develop new revenue structure (vice gasoline tax) ... include impact fees (and link fees to existing infrastructure)</li> <li>• Develop regional, coordinated transportation vision that includes local-level needs</li> <li>• Improve way of documenting policy and decision-making ... make people more aware of what's being done</li> <li>• Make it easier to get encroachment agreements</li> <li>• Provide people with greater mode choices</li> <li>• Review liability laws</li> <li>• Try more to <i>think simple</i> and out-of-the-box</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better address pedestrian-bicycle needs</li> <li>• Invite NCDOT to partner with and be part of local-level conversations ... and do this early in the planning and design process</li> <li>• Research what other states have done ... share results with NCDOT</li> <li>• Review and identify engineering standards that interfere with active life styles</li> <li>• Work to achieve top-down change within NCDOT</li> </ul>

### 3 – School Siting

Problems/ Symptoms	Duration and Fault Tree Branch	Why Problem Exists	Change Options	Desired Commitment	What to Do ... How to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to parts of some school sites is difficult</li> <li>• Closed decision-making procedures (e.g., school board meetings)</li> <li>• Emphasis on limited use (versus multi-use) school facilities</li> <li>• Heavy emphasis on school sports (e.g., high school football)</li> <li>• Inefficient use of existing resources</li> <li>• Insufficient re-investment in existing facilities</li> <li>• Loss of historic school structures</li> <li>• Nobody is responsible for walkability factors</li> <li>• Not enough land for Q-distance</li> <li>• Poor communication among all key players</li> <li>• Recreation facilities don't integrate well with greater community needs</li> <li>• Required real estate space standards don't fit typical community properties</li> <li>• Schools locations not walkable ... distance and safety problems</li> <li>• Site design/layout generally not walkable</li> <li>• Siting of schools on geographic margins (with kids living elsewhere)</li> <li>• Traffic nightmare relating to school clustering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decades (greater than 50 years)</li> <li>• Physical, organizational, and human</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acreage requirements encourages out-of-city locations</li> <li>• Cultural mindset favors sports</li> <li>• DPI standards (e.g., minimum acreage and building height) hinder walkability</li> <li>• Failure to see/understand the <i>big picture</i></li> <li>• Funding issues</li> <li>• Infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks) sometimes not adequate or compatible</li> <li>• Kids/families like new (versus older) schools</li> <li>• Lack of parental concern about issue</li> <li>• Land costs</li> <li>• Land use patterns/decision-making</li> <li>• Large schools often considered higher value (efficiency, curriculum, sports, etc.)</li> <li>• Most kids go to school in private vehicle (versus bus)</li> <li>• Most schools want their own athletic facilities</li> <li>• Neighborhoods not diverse</li> <li>• Perception that walking to school is not good thing to do</li> <li>• Rationale that large schools should serve large geographic areas</li> <li>• School locations typically on high-traffic roads</li> <li>• Schools not viewed as neighborhood assets</li> <li>• We calculate only limited (versus total) costs of school facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify neighborhoods</li> <li>• Increase multi-use of school facilities</li> <li>• Improve connections between land use, transportation, and schools</li> <li>• Change mindset regarding sharing of facilities (e.g., athletic facilities)</li> <li>• Make schools more walkable</li> <li>• Be willing to spend additional funds that will leverage greater health benefits</li> <li>• Develop more walk-to-school programs</li> <li>• Find ways to better integrate and balance infrastructure-facilities-health costs</li> <li>• Use <i>cost per graduate</i> metric to measure success</li> <li>• Improve balance between facilities and access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin by encouraging families and communities to take personal <i>and</i> collective responsibility for making schools walkable</li> <li>• Better align land use, transportation, and school policies</li> <li>• Continue to make safety a #1 concern</li> <li>• Develop educational campaign that targets parents</li> <li>• Emphasize importance and value of adaptive re-use of existing facilities ... and look for ways to incentivize these uses</li> <li>• Identify, research, and share information about existing models that work</li> <li>• Seek ways (at state, county, city, and school board levels) to better coordinate school siting issues</li> <li>• Support and work with others who are working on re-evaluating DPI standards</li> </ul>

## Strategic Directions Workshop

*What innovative and practical actions might either neutralize or counter the blocks and obstacles, policy conflicts, barriers, and gaps that are interfering with realizing our shared, multi-community vision?*

Strategic Directions	Initiatives/Actions		Block/Obstacle Linkages
<p><b>Changing Policies and Building Active Communities</b></p>	<p><b>Better Coordinate Land Use Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find new ways to use vacant properties within urban zones</li> <li>• Mandate regional land use plans (i.e., NC General Assembly directive)</li> <li>• Revise policies to encourage more infill and redevelopment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improve Active Living through Transportation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create comprehensive inter-municipality pedestrian-bicycle plans that highlight and promote active living linkages</li> <li>• Develop multiple design levels for trails</li> <li>• Educate about – and enforce – pedestrian safety/respect laws</li> <li>• Educate local governments about NCDOT <i>Complete Streets</i> (e.g., mini-conference)</li> <li>• Implement NCDOT <i>Complete Streets</i> locally</li> <li>• Prepare and adopt integrated and coordinated pedestrian and bicycle <i>system</i> plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1–Short-sighted and inconsistent governmental decision-making</li> <li>2–Problematic land use policies</li> <li>3–Complicated, obsolete, and inflexible design standards</li> <li>4–Popular but unhealthy mind sets</li> </ul>

**Developing a Support Base for Healthy Living**

**Educate Everyone about Healthy Living**

- Conduct more educational events (e.g., nutrition exercises)
- Encourage *personal* activities that contribute to creating a *public* realm spectrum of health-related experiences (e.g., walk to \_\_\_\_\_ )
- Expand healthy living initiatives within the school system
- Expand public education focus on health initiatives
- Organize walk-to-school events/programs in every school
- Take more field trips
- Target board of education regarding importance of understanding *complete* impacts relating to school siting
- Target elected officials regarding importance of transportation and healthy living connections

**Engage the Community**

- Challenge local boards and committees to identify and promote healthy living initiatives
- Conduct community forums to promote healthy living
- Continue – and build on – relationships created from this project
- Improve communication
- Involve the public in planning and development of health-related initiatives
- Survey community culture

- 1–Short-sighted and inconsistent governmental decision-making
- 2–Popular but unhealthy mind sets

**Seeking Creative Solutions**

**Leverage by Partnering**

- Establish partnerships between growers–cooperatives–schools
- Develop regional-level support to improve healthy eating in schools

**Re-prioritize Funding**

- Create local-level health impact assessment procedures/teams
- Establish fair-share user fees for transportation improvements
- Initiate multi-department/agency task force to better coordinate state programs and budget priorities
- Provide municipalities greater flexibility to raise funds for active living initiatives
- Seek elected official support base for city-wide priorities that guide active living budget recommendations

- 1–Short-sighted and inconsistent governmental decision-making
- 2–Multi-demands on existing limited resources

## Action Planning Workshop

*What planned response (i.e., action steps) can we initiate over the next 3-10 months that will allow our three communities to improve public access to and/or participation in physical activities that promote health and active living within the built environment?*

Team	Launch Activity	Supporting Tasks				Measuring Victory
		1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q	
<i>Endorse Complete Streets Program</i>	<i>Kick-off meeting to discuss scheduling and coordination requirements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate NCDOT and City of Charlotte existing policies</li> <li>• Team meeting to discuss results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field workshop</li> <li>• Audit existing policies (G-B-BC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify policy changes necessary to establish <i>Complete Streets</i> standards</li> <li>• Prepare summary report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff review and comments</li> <li>• Revise summary report, and prepare presentation for elected officials</li> </ul>	<i>Presentation to each city (G-B-BC)</i>
<i>Develop Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Policies and Procedures</i>	<i>Meet to determine key players for the HIA work group</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research existing HIA programs in other communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify points of overlap between HIA process and existing administrative procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine appropriate tools needed to implement HIA process within Gaston County</li> <li>• Prepare report of findings and recommendations</li> </ul>	<i>Present findings and recommendations to local boards</i>

Team	Launch Activity	Supporting Tasks				Measuring Victory
		1 <sup>st</sup> Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> Q	4 <sup>th</sup> Q	
Develop/Revise Other Policies and Initiatives (Local-Regional-State and Existing-Future)	Breakfast meeting to discuss scope of work activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research social costs of health problems within Gaston County</li> <li>• Develop list of potential educational materials for use within the county</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate hiring of 1-2 summer interns to assist staff</li> <li>• Use census data to conduct a community culture survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ways to educate the public about <i>active living by design</i> concepts</li> <li>• Evaluate existing codes for potential revisions that will promote <i>active living by design</i> concepts</li> <li>• Conduct county-wide inventory of under-utilized property to find possible locations for in-fill development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize CRAFT to initiate a dialogue with other regions about how MPOs might better cooperate regarding <i>active living by design</i> concepts</li> </ul>	Meet to assess accomplishments and outline future policy initiatives (i.e., next 1-2 years)

# ***Notes***



Technical Assistance Provided By  
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