

St. Louis, Missouri Streets Become Safer through Traffic Calming Demonstrations

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At A Glance

The City of St. Louis, Missouri, has high obesity rates and high rates of pedestrians killed by cars. In 2015, the city partnered with American Planning Association's (APA) Missouri Chapter, Trailnet, and community organizations to pilot traffic calming demonstrations in four St. Louis neighborhoods. With this, more than 12,000 residents took part in and are better informed about street designs to slow traffic and make streets safer for physical activity. This work was funded, in part, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Public Health Challenge

According to a CDC report, 32.4% of adults in Missouri had obesity in 2015. In St. Louis, 60% of residents were overweight, and 27% had obesity in 2015. A lack of physical activity as well as obesity can lead to a number of serious health conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. While 80% of St. Louis residents live within a half-mile of a public park, busy streets make some neighborhoods unsafe for residents to

walk, bike, or run to these parks. In addition, 36% of fatal traffic crashes in St. Louis involved people walking, compared to 12% nationwide. In 2015, the Department of Transportation found that 21 pedestrians were killed by cars in St. Louis. That's more than 2013 and 2014 combined. These statistics earned St. Louis a spot on the Federal Highway Administration's list of top cities and states with the highest pedestrian and bicycle fatalities.

Find Out More

For more information about Trailnet's active living projects, visit <http://trailnet.org/work/transportation-planning/plan4health/> and join the conversation on social media with #plan4health. Resources from the St. Louis demonstrations are available for free to any organization or neighborhood wanting to create a similar demonstration in their community. To access the guide, "Slow Your Street: A How-To Guide For Pop-up Traffic Calming", visit <http://trailnet.org/>.

The traffic calming project motivated and empowered neighbors to become part of a realistic approach to the challenges pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists face on a daily basis when trying to co-exist on our neighborhood streets.
- Delores Brown, St. Louis resident

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Approach

APA's Missouri Chapter, Trailnet, the HEAL Partnership, and community residents teamed up to host four pop-up traffic calming demonstrations in neighborhoods within the City of St. Louis. Traffic calming demonstrations help to educate residents and community leaders on possible solutions to slow traffic and improve streets so that they are safer for people to travel by foot or bike. In St. Louis, demonstrations included cones, colorful tires, and plants to extend curbs at intersections, narrow traffic lanes, and add speed humps to slow traffic. A how-to guide on traffic-calming solutions was also created to make it easy for any Missouri neighborhood to set up their own pop-up demonstrations.

Results

Overall, in all four neighborhoods – The Ville, JeffVanderLou, Dutchtown, and Carondelet – average vehicle speeds fell nearly 7 mph when the traffic calming demonstrations were in place. In one neighborhood, the average vehicle speed fell nearly 13 mph, and the number of complete stops increased from 34% to 65% during the demonstration. This same neighborhood was served by four bus stops, so the increased stops helped to slow traffic and make streets safer for people to get to their buses during the day. In addition, residents were surveyed on their perceptions of safety and accessibility during and after the demonstrations. In three neighborhoods, survey results indicated that traffic calming demonstrations improved residents' perceptions of street safety, and most residents expressed that the demonstrations made their street feel more pleasant.

What's Next

APA Missouri partners will continue to engage local residents and community leaders about the importance of safer streets. Two neighborhood associations have requested to borrow equipment from the pop-up demonstrations to use in their own communities. A blog hosted by Trailnet will serve as a communication portal for communities to share their experience with hosting traffic calming demonstrations. "Slow Your Street: A How-To Guide For Pop-up Traffic Calming" will continue to serve as a tool to educate organizers about how to set up traffic calming demonstrations. Additionally, APA Missouri and Trailnet will work to share lessons learned from the pop-up demonstration with other state chapter members and planning professionals.