

# COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GRANT

## FINAL REPORT

September 22, 2014

Prepared for: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services  
Agency

Prepared by:  
SANDAG Staff

Dan Gallagher  
Sarah Strand  
Stephan Vance  
Bridget Enderle



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), three risk behaviors — lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use — are responsible for much of the early death related to chronic disease in the United States. Effectively addressing these three behaviors through policy, systems, and environmental change to make healthy choices the easier choices can have a significant impact on preventing negative health consequences, such as heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

In March 2010, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) partnered on projects related to regional planning, active transportation, and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) to increase levels of physical activity and access to healthy food and nutrition. These projects, which made up Phase I of the Healthy Works program at SANDAG, were supported by a \$3 million contract with HHS that was funded through the CDC's Communities Putting Prevention to Work program.

In September 2011, HHS received another CDC grant, the Community Transformation Grant (CTG), and chose to partner with SANDAG again to build on the successes of the Healthy Works Phase I projects. SANDAG and HHS initiated the Healthy Works Phase II projects in July 2012. The projects included: Regional Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan Implementation, Public Health and Wellness Policies for Regional Plans, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation for Physical Activity and Public Health, Regional Complete Streets Policy and Implementation, Health Benefits and Impacts Analysis Program and the continuation of the Public Health Stakeholder Group (PHSG).

With early termination of CTG funding, the following report provides a summary and status of SANDAG-CTG projects to date along with program accomplishments and lessons learned. There is also a section on how CTG projects will be sustained within the agency moving forward.

## **STATUS OF AGREEMENT/PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

### **Public Health and Wellness Policies for Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning**

Contractor shall develop and present to the SANDAG Board of Directors for adoption a Public Health and Wellness Policy Framework for regional land use and transportation plans such as the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Final Status: Public Health White Paper complete. Public Health White Paper will become an appendix and policy considerations will be included in the Regional Plan update. Health Indicators for the Biennial Regional Comprehensive Plan Monitoring Report will also be considered.

### **Regional Monitoring and Evaluation for Physical Activity and Public Health**

Contractor shall develop/integrate comprehensive set of active transportation measures for the next Regional Transportation Plan update.

Final Status: CTG Year 2 carryover funds in the amount of \$124,146 will be used to help bring the current Bike Counter Network Program started under Communities Putting Prevention to Work to be fully operational by paying for data transmission fees for three years, perform battery replacement and address outstanding maintenance issues of bike counters in the field. A user friendly public interface will also be developed to better inform the public on the counter network. This will assist SANDAG to incorporate the system into our transportation data monitoring system.

## **Health Benefits and Impacts Analysis Program**

Contractor shall develop recommendations for institutionalizing health benefits and impacts analysis (HIA) methodologies and protocols into the planning and project development process within SANDAG, and implement a technical assistance program to build capacity within the region to conduct HIAs.

Final Status: The recommendations for institutionalizing HIA methodologies and protocols are complete. The recommendations were presented to the SANDAG Executive Team for consideration, and a number of recommendations have been or are in the process of being implemented, including the incorporation of health into performance measure and evaluation criteria, enhanced communication around health both internally and externally at the agency, streamlining data-sharing processes, sustaining public health through the development of the regional plan, and continuing to collaborate with the HHS. Technical assistance has been provided to the City of Vista to perform a HIA on the Downtown Vista Specific Plan. The technical assistance program will be complete on September 30, 2014, and the City of Vista will complete the HIA independently by the end of the year.

## **Regional Complete Streets Policy and Implementation**

Contractor shall develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy, and establish a technical assistance program to support complete streets policy implementation at the local level.

Final Status: With input from all the key SANDAG stakeholders, SANDAG staff developed a comprehensive policy discussion paper that was used to inform policy makers, local agency staff and the public about Complete Streets policy and implementation options. To get broader public input, SANDAG conducted a public workshop that was attended by approximately 100 people. Then the paper was presented to the Board of Directors to inform them about the principles of Complete Streets and its implementation, and to stimulate a discussion with the Board that would inform the development of the policy.

Based on the direction provided by the Board, and on feedback from the public and the working groups, a draft regional Complete Streets policy has been developed. After an internal review by stakeholder departments and management, the draft policy will be presented to the working groups for discussion and feedback, and to the Transportation and Regional Planning Policy Committees for a recommendation to the Board of Directors. Adoption of a policy is anticipated sometime in the fall 2014.

Implementation of a technical assistance program for local agencies is an anticipated implementation strategy that would be required by the regional policy when it is adopted. Initial technical assistance would have been supported by CTG funding, so with no CTG program after the end of this federal fiscal year, other funding sources will have to be identified to support this effort.

## Regional Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan Implementation

Contractor shall conduct an SRTS analysis to identify SRTS infrastructure and non-infrastructure needs and develop a phasing and funding strategy to implement highest priority projects and programs.

Final Status: SANDAG surpassed the outcome objective for this program component by conducting a regional needs analysis, identifying priority projects/programs, creating four potential implementation scenarios, and strategies for funding implementation.

### PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Describe accomplishments and outcomes of all major activities**
- **Include a description of the specific policy, systems and environmental changes that were achieved**
- **Describe any unanticipated or additional accomplishments**
- Public Health White Paper was first in a series of white papers to be complete with substantial input from the PHSG, Working Groups, and Policy Committees. The Public Health White Paper was then finalized and put online under Environment/Communities on the San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan webpage. Broad ranging support for Public Health policy objectives from SANDAG Committee Members.
- Regional Monitoring and Evaluation for Physical Activity and Public Health:

The Regional Bike Counter Network managed by San Diego State University contains 54 units strategically located in 37 sites in 15 jurisdictions. Site selection was based on regional bikeway corridors, urban place types and socio-economic factors. Data is collected continuously at 15 minute increments and uploaded daily allowing for analysis of bicycling and walking behavior. SANDAG is currently considering how to eventually integrate the network into our transportation data collection system and incorporate the data into the State of the Commute Report. The Bike Counter Network was part of several information announcements sent out by iCommute staff for May Bike to Work Month.
- HIA: The recommendations to incorporate health in to the planning and project development process developed the awareness and education of agency staff about the public health connection to planning, and helped elevate public health as a priority within the agency. Public health was added into the budget for the regional plan, and health considerations were incorporated in to performance measures, evaluation criteria, vision, goals and objectives for the plan. Additionally, public health staff was added into the intergovernmental project development review process. The PHSG was sustained at least through the development of the regional plan, and staff implanted changes to PHSG membership to include medical doctors, school representatives, and others that can help broaden health perspectives and build consensus. Staff will explore potential health indicators for addition to the Regional Comprehensive Plan Monitoring Report and will consider ways to strengthen health-related factors in grant program evaluation criteria during future policy updates. SANDAG will continue to pursue grants and other sources of

funding to sustain public health planning efforts, will continue to prioritize health in the annual Overall Work Program, and will continue providing support and resources to local jurisdictions, for example through grant funding or technical assistance, as available. The Scoping for a Health Assessment Tool assisted the agency in determining the cost, feasibility, and uses of a variety of tools. Staff is currently facilitating a pilot of the HUD HCTI assessment tool, which was included in the scoping report. SANDAG will continue to support local jurisdictions through the pilot of the HCTI tool.

The technical assistance program enabled HIA expert consultants Human Impact Partners to provide assistance and resources to the City of Vista in the development of an HIA for the Downtown Specific Plan. HIP provided scoping assistance, draft pathway diagrams, scoping worksheets (including research questions), an example of a document to use in HIA subgroup meeting, and examples of a completed HIA. The City of Vista will complete the HIA independent of HIP using a separate consultant.

- Development of the Complete Streets discussion paper provided a focus for identifying the key issues that need to be addressed in formulating a regional complete streets policy, and it was an effective vehicle for informing policy-makers about the options available to them when establishing a regional policy and implementation strategy.
- The public workshop that was held on Complete Streets also provided an opportunity to discuss issues related to Complete Streets with stakeholders and community members, but it also turned out to be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the significant level of public interest in Complete Streets.

While a final policy was not developed and adopted before the termination of the CTG contract, the project resulted in a significant amount of discussion about Complete Streets among SANDAG staff that will facilitate systems changes once a policy is adopted. Issues were aired and potential solutions were identified. Once a Complete Streets policy is adopted, environmental change will occur over time through the capital project development process.

- Regional SRTS Strategic Plan Implementation: The four implementation framework scenarios developed through this project provide options for establishing an effective and comprehensive regional SRTS program that reflects the region's goals and national best practices. Whereas the required deliverables were intended to identify priorities for implementing programs with CTG funding, the final outcomes provide a strong basis for establishing a far more comprehensive and sustainable program. This information can be used by SANDAG and policymakers to determine the most appropriate long-term approach to regional SRTS assistance.

Additionally, the detailed cost estimates developed as a part of this project can be incorporated into San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan, as an initial step to seeking future funding for regional SRTS implementation.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Depending on how Public Health and the Built Environment are presented, broad support among diverse coalitions can be built with the unifying message of Public Health.
- The Bike Counter Network existed with little visibility both within SANDAG and with the bicycling and walking public. Raising the visibility of the benefits of the network through better coordination among all the involved agencies will help the network become better integrated into regional data collection.
- There is a need to continue bridging the “language gap” between planning and public health. It will be important to develop a consistent message about health and planning that is sensitive to diverse stakeholders and can help build consensus. Focusing on health as a unifying effort can diffuse opposition.
- Support for public health planning emphasized the need for a “health in all policies” approach within the agency. This has been most effective by incorporating health into existing work and conversations, for example by emphasizing the health co-benefits of lowering vehicles-miles-traveled, and encouraging active transportation, smart growth, energy efficiency, and climate change mitigation/adaptation.
- There is a need to further identify and fill data gaps and develop a streamlined process for inter-agency data sharing.
- HIA methodology is most effective during the planning process, well in advance of the project development phase. Health must be considered early on for the best chance at implementation.
- In the process of engaging local agency stakeholders in the development of the Complete Streets Discussion Paper, we learned that interest in Complete Streets is widespread throughout the region, but there is little interest in having the regional agency (SANDAG) dictate policy on Complete Streets to those agencies. Instead, technical and financial support can be used as incentives to encourage local action.
- Within the San Diego region SRTS programs and projects are unevenly dispersed and absent in many areas where need is most pronounced. Also, reporting and evaluating SRTS effectiveness is inconsistent throughout the region. Despite an incomplete picture of the current status and need for SRTS, there is high demand for local SRTS funding. More work with local agencies and policymakers is needed to determine the best approach to strengthening SRTS within the region.

## SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

### What is your plan for sustaining the project or elements of the project?

- Public Health Policies for Regional Plans: In May 2014, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved funding in the amount of \$108,000 to continue health considerations in SANDAG’s policies, projects, programs, and plans. This will also allow the PHSG to continue through the Regional Plan update.

- **Regional Monitoring and Evaluation for Physical Activity and Public Health:**  
The long term objective is to eventually integrate the Bike Counter Network data into the transportation monitoring system at SANDAG.
- **HIA:** From the recommendations to institutionalize HIA methods and protocols, the SANDAG Executive Team directed staff to consolidate the recommendations into overall goals accompanied by a menu of implementation options to help achieve those goals. This document will serve as a guiding resource to assist staff in continuing to make progress on incorporating health across the agency, and can help monitor this progress.
- **Complete Streets:** The draft Complete Streets policy will include recommendations for an implementation program that will institutionalize Complete Streets practices at SANDAG. In addition, the policy will likely direct SANDAG to provide training to local agency staff and others on Complete Streets, and to provide incentives for local agencies to adopt local Complete Streets policies and practices.
- **Regional SRTS Strategic Plan Implementation:** Due to early termination of CTG funding, implementation would require establishing an alternative funding source. Toward the end of 2015, SANDAG leadership will review the project recommendations and provide guidance on next steps.

**Describe any efforts or systems changes that are already or will be sustained and describe the factors or circumstances that allowed you to sustain these elements.**

- Public Health White Paper and policy considerations will be incorporated into the Regional Plan update known as San Diego Forward. Health Indicators for the Biennial Regional Comprehensive Plan Monitoring Report will also be considered.
- **Regional Monitoring and Evaluation for Physical Activity and Public Health:** Strategic use of CTG Year 2 Carryover funds will help ensure that the current Bike Counter Network becomes fully functional to assist SANDAG with a longer term objective to eventually integrate the data into our transportation monitoring system. The Federal Highway Administration is also very interested and impressed with the San Diego Regional Bike Counter Network. They want to help fill the gap in active transportation data collection by identifying best practices, encouraging data collection with standards for quality control, and by-building a national database of bike and pedestrian counts.
- **HIA:**
  - Increased staff awareness of the public health and planning connection.
  - Public health has been elevated within the agency as a priority.
  - Incorporation of health throughout the regional plan update, and moving forward with possible incorporation of health indicators into the Regional Comprehensive Plan Monitoring Report.

- Identified the need to improve communication around health to develop a consistent message that is coordinated with existing San Diego County efforts and can increase public awareness of the nexus between transportation and health, including improvements to the public health webpage.
  - Added public health staff to the intergovernmental review process and checklist.
  - Fostered and further developed new inter-departmental relationships around health including with Human Resources and the Criminal Justice research division.
- Complete Streets: Previous efforts to provide design guidance for walkable and smart growth communities provide ready-made tools for supporting Complete Streets implementation across the region.

**Describe the impact of implementing this project on your organization, partners and/or community (i.e., how are these different as a result of this work and experience).**

- Public health was elevated as a priority within the agency.
- Agency staff became more aware and educated about the connections between agency work and public health outcomes.
- Agency staff became more aware of public health resources available for them to apply to agency work.
- PHSG stakeholders provided valuable perspectives on regional plan efforts and learned about SANDAG planning efforts. This has helped to build partnerships and collaborations across industries, and has helped shrink the gap between planning and public health professionals by fostering working relationships.
- The adopted Complete Streets policy will put systems in place to ensure all the infrastructure work that takes place at SANDAG will accommodate to the maximum extent the needs of people on foot, riding a bike, or taking transit. Within the organization, this will require an increased level of inter-departmental communication and coordination that has already begun to take place in advance of the policy adoption.