



## Fact Sheet

### How active do we need to be?

- The Surgeon General recommends that all persons accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, or preferably all days of the week (Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the U.S. Surgeon General, 1996).
- The National Association for Sports and Physical Education encourages elementary school children to receive at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily (National Association for Sports and Physical Education, 2001).
- The American Cancer Society recommends that children and teens be active for at least an hour each day (American Cancer Society Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Cancer Prevention, 2002).

### Are Maine folks active enough?

- 56% of Maine adults have a sedentary lifestyle defined as leisure time physical activity of less than 20 minutes per day or less than three days per week (Maine Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2000).
- 34% of Maine children do not participate in vigorous physical activity on three days or more per week (Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001).
- 95% of Maine high school students do not attend daily physical education (Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2001).
- In the United States, women and low-income groups are less physically active than men and higher income groups.

### How can trails and safe routes help?

- Communities that build walking and biking trails support active lifestyles and boost physical activity levels among people in that area (Brownson, R.C., *American Journal of Public Health*, December, 2001).
- People who are less active to begin with are more likely to begin walking or biking due to local trail development (Brownson, R.C., Promoting Physical Activity in Rural Communities Walking Trail Access, Use, and Effects, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2000; 18(3)).
- Trails have shown to benefit low-income groups the greatest by initiating and increasing their activity level, while also maintaining activity levels in higher income groups (Brownson, R.C., Promoting Physical Activity in Rural Communities Walking Trail Access, Use, and Effects, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2000; 18(3)).



## Fact Sheet *(continued)*

- Among older adults, physical activity rates increase twofold when their neighborhoods are perceived to be safe (The National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults 50 and Older, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2001).
- Aspects most appealing about trails are reported to be (in order) scenic beauty, availability as a free place to exercise, convenient location, safe surface and lighting (Brownson, R.C., Promoting Physical Activity in Rural Communities Walking Trail Access, Use, and Effects, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2000; 18(3)).
- Women and low-income groups are more likely to use trails for walking than men and higher-income groups (Brownson, R.C., Promoting Physical Activity in Rural Communities Walking Trail Access, Use, and Effects, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2000; 18(3)).

### **How can trails and safe routes help our community-at-large?**

- In Maine an estimated \$36.3 million was spent by bicycle tourists in 1999 (Maine Department of Transportation. Bicycle Tourism in Maine Economic Impacts and Marketing Recommendations Executive Summary, April 2001).
- Bicycle- and pedestrian-based tourism increases the local economy and improves public health by providing opportunities for physical activity (National Center for Bicycling and Walking. The Economic Benefits of Bicycle- and Pedestrian-based Tourism, and the Economic Impacts of Trail Development on-line report, 1999-2002).
- Air quality improves with fewer cars on the road.
- Business owners near the trail or safe route benefit from an increase in bike and pedestrian traffic.
- Trails and safe routes create opportunities where athletes can train at the same time as leisurely family outings take place.
- Trails and safe routes create settings where community members can socialize and connect, strengthening community ties.
- Trails and safe routes provide opportunities for year-round recreation such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter, and walking and biking during all seasons.