A walkable environment gives people more transportation choices and improves the overall quality of life. A well-designed network of streets and sidewalk system is essential to make people feel safe. It also allows people to make connections between transportation modes as well as between neighborhoods. Investments in the pedestrian environment have positive impacts on all road users, and can encourage economic vibrancy, physical activity and overall area health. In many places in Memphis, basic pedestrian infrastructure is lacking, yet pedestrian activity persists. **Pedestrian infrastructure improvements can reduce parking and traffic by 5-15% at minimal cost**

### Why it’s important

Walking is the cheapest, easiest and most convenient way to travel. Everyone - whether they drive, ride transit, carpool, bicycle or take a taxi – is a pedestrian at some point in their trip. Yet, in many of the areas of densest employment in the Mid-South region, getting to the front door of a building is difficult. Large employment sites are set back from roadways, with no pedestrian path to the building entry. Parking lots are oceans of asphalt. Many sites are also fenced, with a gate that is only accessible by vehicle, even where bus stops are right nearby. Roadways lack sidewalks, lighting or any form of pedestrian refuge. Traffic signals and major roadways are impossible to cross as a pedestrian. Pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods or nearby shops or restaurants do not exist. Improving pedestrian access makes all other travel options more feasible and makes it easier to get to work.

### How it works

A Safe Routes to Work program contains the same five key components as the Safe Routes to Schools but modified for employees:

- **Education**: Teach employees the skills necessary to navigate through busy streets and show them how to be active participants in the program. This can be provided through a simple pamphlet or brochure.

- **Engineering**: A licensed traffic engineer can assist businesses in developing a plan to provide a safer environment for employees to walk and bike to work.

- **Encouragement**: Events, contests and promotional materials are incentives that encourage employees to try walking and biking.

- **Enforcement**: Police officers, crossing guards and other law enforcement officials can participate throughout the Safe Routes process by monitoring traffic speeds and intersection. Police can also help pedestrians feel safer.

- **Evaluation**: Program participation should regularly be monitored to determine the growth in employee participation. Typically, “before and after” surveys are taken to ascertain any change in travel mode to work over the course of the year.

### Funding

Tennessee DOT Multimodal Access Fund is available for projects such as bicycle lanes, sidewalk and pedestrian crossing improvements, bus shelters, and park and ride facilities, among others. TDOT set aside $30 million in its *Three-Year Work Plan* for the fund (or an average of $10 million per year, though yearly amounts could vary depending on interest). Multimodal Access projects, TDOT says, will be funded 95 percent by the department, with a 5 percent match from local funds. Projects with a total cost of $1 million or less are eligible

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1 [http://www.aashtojournal.org/Pages/110113TDOTaccessfund.aspx](http://www.aashtojournal.org/Pages/110113TDOTaccessfund.aspx)
What can be done

Promoting bicycle and pedestrian transport modes can also be accomplished through simple design changes, some of which can be implemented at little additional cost. Simple low cost pedestrian infrastructure improvements include:

- Providing access from residential neighborhoods to regional facilities
- Adding pedestrian gateways to employment complexes at strategic locations (near bus stops, crossings)
- Creating continuous sidewalks and crosswalks at intersections
- Handicapped accessible curb ramp design
- Highly visible pavement markings
- Designing tight curb radii
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting

Best Practice

Safe Routes to Schools programs have been employed nationally to look at specific and common travel paths and make improvements. A Safe Routes to Work program could work similarly and integrate health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness and safety under one employer-focused program.

Through the Safe Routes to School program, the City of Oxford, Mississippi passed a complete streets ordinance in 2010 in order to make more pedestrian improvements including constructing a median and three raised crosswalks. The median was built to calm traffic around the city’s middle school and the crosswalks were constructed to allow children to safely cross the street from the middle school to the Boys and Girls Club.

The town of Cottonwood, Minnesota received $87,575 in Safe Routes to School funds from the Minnesota DOT; $3,000 was be used for educational and promotional activities, and the remainder was to be used to construct a path around the lake, which was completed in 2009. Before the construction of the path, only about 5% percent of Lakeview students walked or biked to school. Today 11% of students use the path at least once per week and an additional 13% use the path at least once per month to walk or bike to school and for other recreational purposes. Students are not the only ones to take advantage of the path. In the evenings, large numbers of individuals and families use the path for jogging, walking, or bicycling.
Application to Mid-South

While many areas can benefit from pedestrian improvements, physical and programmatic improvements are most applicable building from areas of multiple activity – near residential areas, where multiple employers are located, near transit hubs, and in areas with complimentary activity. Examples include:

**Poplar Avenue/I-240 cluster**

There are many midsized employers here, often in suburban office style developments. Poplar Street is the busiest bus corridor in Greater Memphis, but it can be difficult to cross the street. Improvements could focus on developing safe, well-lit crossings at strategic locations to take advantage of bus stops.

**Nonconnah Industrial Park (Aerotropolis)**

Medtronics is one of the largest employers in Shelby County, and Nonconnah is an attractive, landscaped environment with multiple other businesses. While this area lacks a full complement of nearby stores and restaurants – this is partially due to the inability of employees to walk in this area. Sidewalks are inconsistent, buildings are set back, and there is little to slow traffic through this corridor. Front door pedestrian connections are also sorely lacking.

**President’s Island**

While few would walk to President’s Island, the area around the market could be a key transit/pedestrian node. Linking the multiple employers on President’s Island to this node could strengthen that area as a transit hub, and provide more interaction between businesses.

**Germantown Road**

This suburban retail corridor is populated by restaurants, big box stores, smaller establishments, and national chains. Pleasant, residential neighborhoods are adjacent to this corridor, but the overall design is auto-oriented. Germantown Road itself is difficult to cross, as are the many cross streets, driveways and parking lots. Pedestrian improvements could minimize traffic on this corridor, allow for greater interaction, and enhance the ability of employees to benefit from carsharing, transit or other transportation demand management programs.