Introduction
The Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH), in partnership with Kent State University, conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to inform and influence planning and design decisions related to the establishment of the Eastside Greenway (ESG).

The ESG is a proposed trail and greenway network traversing 20 diverse communities on Cuyahoga County’s eastside, including the city of Cleveland. The plan intends to provide recommendations for trail alignments, trailhead locations, and a phasing strategy for moving forward into design and implementation of a unified network that will serve as an alternative mode of transportation, connecting neighborhoods to employment centers, transit, green space and recreation opportunities.

Background
The Eastside Greenway Health impact Assessment (HIA) was proposed by a representative of the Cleveland Metroparks during a local HIA training in 2012 hosted by the Northeast Ohio Health Impact Assessment Partnership (NEO HIA-P).

The Metroparks and other planning partners of the proposed Eastside Greenway project recognized the potential it has to make the communities in the project area better places to live, learn, work and play. The communities the Greenway will cross are very diverse economically and racially, and range in their opportunities for healthy living. Health issues vary across the communities, with the poorest health outcomes (such as high rates of obesity and chronic disease) geographically concentrated in the urban core of the project area (Cleveland and Inner Ring Suburbs). In these same areas where conditions that shape health are not spread equitably, there are significant differences in life expectancy, depending on where people live (see life expectancy map page 3).

What is HIA? HIA is a combination of procedures, methods and tools that systematically judges the potential and sometimes unintended effects of a proposed project, plan or policy on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA identifies appropriate actions to manage those effects HIA’s involve six main steps, including Screening, Scoping, Assessment, Recommendations, Reporting and Monitoring/Evaluation.

Community involvement is encouraged at every step of the HIA.

  National Academies for the Sciences.

The HIA Process
The Eastside Greenway Health Impact Assessment (HIA) examined the potential health and equity impacts of the Eastside Greenway Plan. The HIA focused on the original project area which included
14 of the 20 communities. The HIA team, led by the CCBH, intentionally focused on equity throughout the HIA process in an effort to understand how new trail alignments, connections and trailheads in the diverse ESG project area could impact usage by vulnerable populations living in these areas.

To launch and guide the Eastside Greenway HIA process, CCBH established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) including both CCBH staff, and ESG planning partners such as LAND studio, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, Cleveland Metroparks, Cleveland City Planning, academic partners, bike advocates, parks experts and national HIA experts. The HIA process started before the ESG planning process even started, when the ESG was still in the feasibility assessment phase, and it continued to move forward simultaneously with the planning process. Because there was strong buy in and support for the HIA by planning partners, LAND studio and Cuyahoga County Planning Commission included language around the coordination with the HIA in the scope of work used for identification and selection of the planning consultant team. As the planning process formalized, the consultants welcomed the HIA team to the steering committee for the Eastside Greenway Plan and provided opportunities to gather input and provide updates related to the HIA via steering committee meetings and public meetings. More importantly, the planning consultants and partners ultimately committed to incorporating the HIA findings and recommendations into the final plan.

**Equality:** The quality or state of being equal; refers to the identical distribution of resources, decision making and outcomes regardless of level of need.

**Equity:** Providing all people with fair opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Goals of the Eastside Greenway HIA

1. Create opportunities for all by influencing plan design, construction and future programming.
2. Build capacity for Health Impact Assessment.
3. Enhance voice, engagement and empowerment of community residents.
4. Influence systems changes that consider health and equity in land use decision making.
5. Foster cross municipality collaborations to inform and influence local land use decision making.
6. Advance a “Health and Equity in All Policies” approach to decision making.

This HIA was supported by a Program grant supported by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the PEW Charitable Trusts, with funding from the Saint Luke’s Foundation in partnership with Cleveland City Planning Commission.
HIA focus areas
Eastside Greenway stakeholders participated in the selection process for the HIA focus areas of study. The HIA team and the HIA Technical Advisory Committee created research questions and established methods to assess the HIA focus areas. Assessment methods to answer the research questions included literature review of peer-reviewed and grey literature; existing data collection from recent local surveys, the United States Census, Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Vital Statistics, Walk score, local trail counts conducted by the Rails to Trails Conservancy; and primary data collection on fear and perception of crime to accompany municipal level crime data.

HIA Findings
(all data and findings are based on the original 14 communities in the ESG study area)

Equity
- Demographic data in the ESG study area such as education, employment, income, racial makeup, mortality from chronic disease and life expectancy, revealed that people living in the Northwest area of the greenway have fewer opportunities to be healthy and worse health outcomes than those living in the Southeast area.
- Research suggests that communities of color use parks and trails less, depending on the amenities offered, and use them for different reasons than White residents. A majority of African American (60%) and White (75%) respondents to a Metroparks survey indicating using parks for walking. More African Americans prefer to use parks for picnicking (54%) and special events (32%) than Whites (43% and 25% respectively), while Whites prefer to use parks for bicycling (32%) and observing nature (29%) more than African Americans (15% and 12% respectively).
- Based on the literature, the Eastside Greenway has the potential to promote health equity and mitigate health disparities. Developing the ESG through the diverse communities on the Eastside of Cuyahoga County could:
  - Increase access to physical activity, recreation, and social connection for over 275,000 people living within a ½ mile of the proposed trail system, of which more than half (139,121) are African American.
  - Increase physical activity and decrease the odds of overweight while contributing to decreases in health disparities.
Crime and Fear of Crime

Based on the literature, fear of crime contributes to negative health outcomes, e.g., stress, elevated blood pressure and overall constrained outdoor physical activity in the study communities.

- Violent crimes (assault, robbery, sex offenses – forcible, and homicide) and quality of life crimes (disorderly conduct, drunkenness, prostitution, and curfew/loitering/vagrancy) are present in elevated levels in areas within and proximate to the ESG. Without reducing these types of crimes in these areas, use of the ESG will be limited, especially among women, minorities, and low-income populations.
- Fear of crime among participants is commonly due to either witnessing crime or being a victim, sometimes on multiple occasions. Based on our “Fear of Crime” mapping compared with actual crime, residents’ fear of crime is warranted.
- Reducing fear of crime in the ESG area would increase its use and improve the previously noted health outcomes. Reducing crime and the fear of crime are long-term initiatives that require community buy-in and participation. The ESG will not have its desired health and equity outcomes without addressing these issues.
Transportation, Transportation Safety, and Physical Activity

- Constructing roadways (including shoulders, sidewalks, and performing “road diets” to slow motorized traffic) to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians within roadways can reduce collisions between automobiles and pedestrians and cyclists by up to 88%.
- Highly mixed land use (residential, commercial, industrial and educational) areas in the northwest sections of the ESG and those that are more aesthetically pleasing will see the most increases in walking and biking.
- Based on literature it is estimated that approximately 20,000 residents (5%) living in the ESG region will use new ESG trails for walking and biking.
- The northwest sections of the ESG with higher population densities are more likely to have higher increases in bicycling and walking as a result of implementing the ESG plan.
- Bicycling will increase the most on sections of the ESG where separated lanes, divided paths, bicycle boulevards are included in the plan.

Social Cohesion

- Based on literature, having a developed network of trails and park systems such as the ESG, could increase opportunities for relaxation and social interaction, in turn, reducing stress, improving health behaviors, and improving mental health for residents.
- Residents living in close proximity (½ mile radius) to the ESG will have improved social connections with neighbors compared with those living in car-oriented suburbs.
- Community events are more likely to have better participation if located within an interconnected trail and open space network like the ESG, as opposed to within more isolated parks or recreational areas.
- Improvements in social interaction cannot be realized without addressing the safety, crime and perception of crime recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings listed above, the HIA prioritized key recommendations of the HIA. (For the full list of recommendations see the ESG HIA full report). The majority of the recommendations will impact several or all of the HIA focus areas.

- Establish an ESG coalition of stakeholders and community members from each area of the ESG to ensure that facilities, educational campaigns, policies and systems developed are appropriate for the diverse communities within the ESG and that commitments to vulnerable neighborhoods are followed through upon.
- Develop a Neighborhood Watch that provides visible presence within and proximate to the ESG; publicize the ESG among current Neighborhood Watch groups in different municipalities.
- Establish a comprehensive greenway management plan for paths and facilities within and proximate to the ESG which includes roles for residents, community groups, business owners and responds to different resource capacities in diverse communities.
- Consider geographic distribution of trail connections and trail heads to assure equitable access for diverse populations throughout the ESG.
- Paths should be well-lit and provide clear visibility for users.
- Plan to incorporate play fields and picnic areas in regions with higher African American and/or Latino populations.
- Create an education campaign to promote bicycling and walking among diverse populations.
- Identify access points for ESG areas to understand where alignments and connections should be created across the diverse ESG communities.
- Survey ESG community area residents to identify activities of interest, usage patterns, with consideration of the diverse populations within the ESG.

**Outcomes thus far and next steps:**

There have already been some notable successes in the integration of health and equity into the ESG planning process including: 1) selecting a consultant willing to incorporate health impacts; 2) learning by all parties on the equity impacts of their decisions; 3) inclusion of the Board of Health into the Steering Committee and the HIA information into the community engagement process of planning; and 4) commitment by the consultants and the project leads to incorporate health and equity information and recommendations in the ESG plan.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health will follow through with the commitment to improving health in the communities impacted by the Eastside Greenway in the following ways:

- Continued involvement by the CCBH in the new governance structure for ESG;
- Continued measurement of health and equity impacts as the ESG plan is implemented;
- Share success and lessons learned; and refine our work to best meet the needs of planning partners and the community.
- Cultivate our partnerships to advance Health Impact Assessment and Health and Equity in All Policies.
- Continue our commitment to promote community involvement in land use and other key decision making processes.
- As our work moves forward, we will use the NEO HIA-P website and other communication vehicles to update our partners and the community on our progress.

Visit www.neohiap.org for more information, maps, sources and updates on this project.

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