Exploring the Contributions of Local Health Departments in Land Use and Transportation Policy: Implications for Cross-Sector Collaboration

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Background

- Popular media, professional societies and government agencies endorse active transportation.
- Transportation and land use policies impact the built environment and can promote physical activity.
- Community- & street-scale urban design and land use policies are effective approaches.
- Land use and zoning policy decision-making involves planners, transportation/public works, & non-health departments.
- Local health departments (LHD) are encouraged to participate in transportation and land use decision-making, but it is outside their expertise.
- A need exists for cross-sector collaboration, given LHDs limited resources and staffing constraints.

Themes

- Physical activity & health perspective (n=44)
  - Emphasize built environment impacts on health
  - Broaden appeal and importance of transportation and land use discussions
  - Incorporate transportation and land use goals into existing priorities

- Knowledge of evidence base & best practices (n=23)
  - Provide evidence/base practices supporting health impacts of active transportation

- Health equity (n=8)
  - Draw attention to the negative impact of land use and transportation decisions on vulnerable populations

- Resource Support (n=27)
  - Identify, write, and secure grants
  - Sources of small grants, technical assistance or testimony

- Data & assessment (n=41)
  - Access to local datasets, collect qualitative community-level data, analyze and collaborate on health data & assessments
  - Identify needs, prioritize needs, describe utilization and demonstrate policy impact

Research Questions

1. What is the perceived value of LHD participation in built environment decision-making among practitioners in relevant sectors?
2a. What are the perceived unique contributions of LHDs?
2b. How can LHDs assist other departments in meeting shared goals

Methods

- Individual semi-structured telephone interviews
- Purposive & snowball sampling
- Sample identified through PAPRN+ & other colleagues
- Experience with public health in transportation & land use processes
- Thematic Analysis conducted by 2 analysts
- Interrater reliability 91%

Sample

- Total of 49 respondents
- Representing 13 U.S. States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>19 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use planning</td>
<td>13 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/public works</td>
<td>13 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Advocacy &amp; Administration)</td>
<td>15 (12)</td>
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Strengths

- First study of perceived LHD value
- High interrater agreement
- Large rich data source

Limitations

- Sample is non-representative due to non-random sampling methods

Public Health Implications

- Themes mirror core public health values, capabilities, and functions promulgated by national public health leaders.
- Themes align with Public Health 3.0.
- Identification of content areas and skill sets where LHDs can leverage their strengths to foster cross-sector collaborations.
- Inform development of sustainable capacity building strategies to increase skills, infrastructure and resources for LHD involvement in built environment decision-making to achieve active community environments.
- Current work includes engaging an expert panel and conducting a nationally representative survey of LHDs to develop standards of involvement/capabilities.