

# Three Northwest HIAs

Please visit our Web site, [www.nwpublichealth.org](http://www.nwpublichealth.org), to read full papers about how Health Impact Assessments have been used in Spokane, Washington and Oregon.

## Spokane

A partnership of The Lands Council (a local nonprofit organization), the City of Spokane, and Spokane Regional Health District performed a Rapid HIA, or health impact assessment, on the pedestrian portion of the multimodal transportation strategy in the *Fast Forward Spokane: Downtown Plan Update*. This economic development project included strategies for promoting active transportation, environmental stewardship, and a healthy “built environment.”

This project used the rapid HIA model and looked at policy statements supporting multimodal transportation, specifically bike and pedestrian connections. Rapid HIAs can be carried out in days to weeks with minimal resources. This one focused on pedestrian issues.

It took about six weeks to complete the rapid HIA on the pedestrian portion of *Fast Forward*. The partners presented two recommendations to the Spokane City Council: a new pedestrian zone in a select area of downtown Spokane during the weekends, and prioritized pedestrian improvements near transit stops and other pedestrian-dense areas, including large employers. These could encourage physical activity, induce public transit demand, and improve – among other elements – air quality and social equity.

The online article describes what went well and what the partners would do differently next time. ■

### Authors

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# SR 520:

## The first mandated HIA in the United States.



As Dr. Dannenberg mentioned in the previous article (pages 12 & 13), the first legally required Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in the US was for the proposed State Route 520 bridge replacement linking Seattle with its eastside suburbs.

In 2007, Governor Chris Gregoire signed Senate Bill 6099, a legislative directive to use mediation to resolve the impasse over choosing a safer, reliable replacement for the SR 520 Bridge across Lake Washington. The directive also asked Public Health - Seattle & King County and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency to conduct a health impact assessment of the project, focusing on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and other public health issues.

Through the lens of the HIA, the SR 520 project was seen as a means to support alternatives to the automobile, reduce emissions that cause pollution, create community connections, provide amenities that improve mental well-being, and contribute to a visually stimulating environment.

Just as transportation needs have changed since the bridge was built in 1963, health concerns shifted to an emphasis on physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Among the recommendations were landscaped lids and green spaces, transit improvements, pedestrian and bicycling amenities, design improvements, and noise reduction strategies. The HIA and background material are at [www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/hia.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/hia.aspx)

## Oregon

When Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski proposed targets for reducing vehicle miles driven in the state's six metropolitan areas as part of a greenhouse gas initiative, Upstream Public Health, a health advocacy non-profit, commissioned the first-ever Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on a climate-change-related policy. The goal was to study how this policy proposal would affect Oregonians' health.

The analysis was conducted by researchers at Oregon Health and Science University and several partners, guided by a 12-person advisory committee of technical experts and community groups. Partners included the state public health division, metropolitan planning organizations, land use and planning organizations, public health non-profits, academic healthcare organizations, and bicycle and pedestrian non-profits.

The HIA looked at how three policy areas that reduce driving – land-use planning, public transit, and driving-related fees – would affect physical activity, air pollution, and car collision rates. Eleven specific policy proposals were examined, chosen by the advisory committee, including street connectivity, mixed-use neighborhoods, access to public transit,

and driving-related fees such as employee parking fees. The study, which found that a combination of these policies is the most effective way to promote positive health benefits, is a critical analysis that decision makers can use to develop healthier urban land-use and transportation policies at the local level. The results were shared with state legislators, mayors, and metropolitan governmental bodies, leading to increased consideration of health impacts in local and state transportation and land use planning.

The online article expands on these concepts, presenting the study's results and conclusions. ■

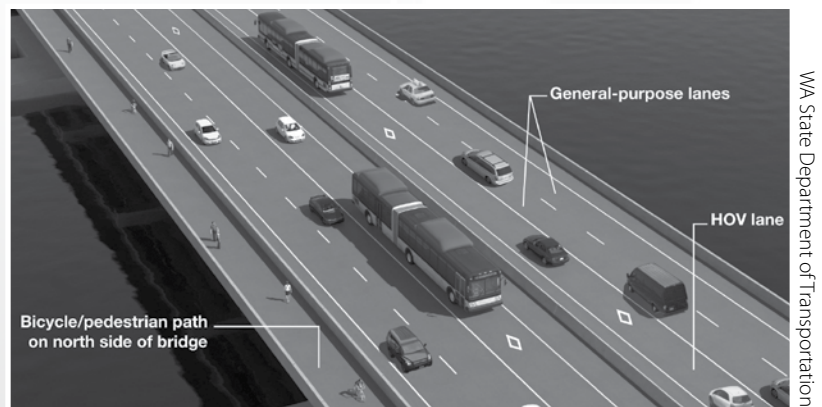
### Authors

Mel Rader, MS, MS, is project director at Upstream Public Health in Portland; Yvonne Michael, ScD, and Leslie Perdue, MPH, were in the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University when the research was completed.

Read the full articles [online....](http://www.nwpublichealth.org)  
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## Goals of State Route 520 HIA:

1. Assess the SR 520 Replacement Bridge and High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes' impact on air quality, carbon emissions and other public health issues.
2. Protect public health by raising awareness among decision-makers of the relationship between health and the physical, social and economic environment, thereby ensuring that they include a consideration of health consequences in their deliberations.
3. Make recommendations to enhance the positive impacts and to remove or minimize any negative impacts on health.



Rendering of proposed SR 520 bridge

Both photos on left and underlay of the current SR 520 bridge courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives Photograph Collection taken during an inspection tour in July 2005.

### Author

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