Seven Thoughts Recalled on a Very Long Walk

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Built Environment & Health Conference

Topeka, KS
Oct. 2009

River front trail in Wichita, KS

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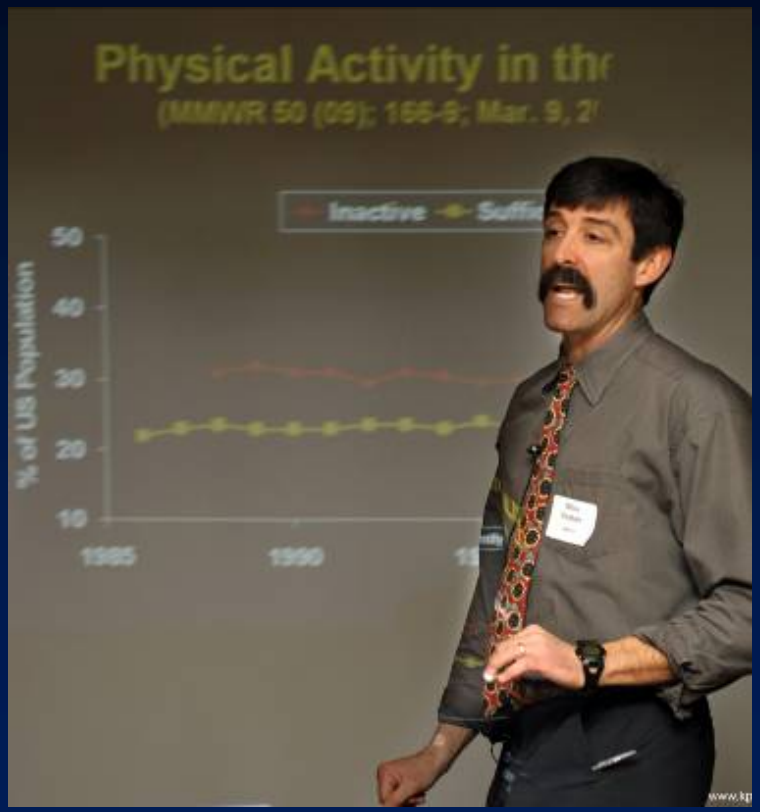
Your choice:



or

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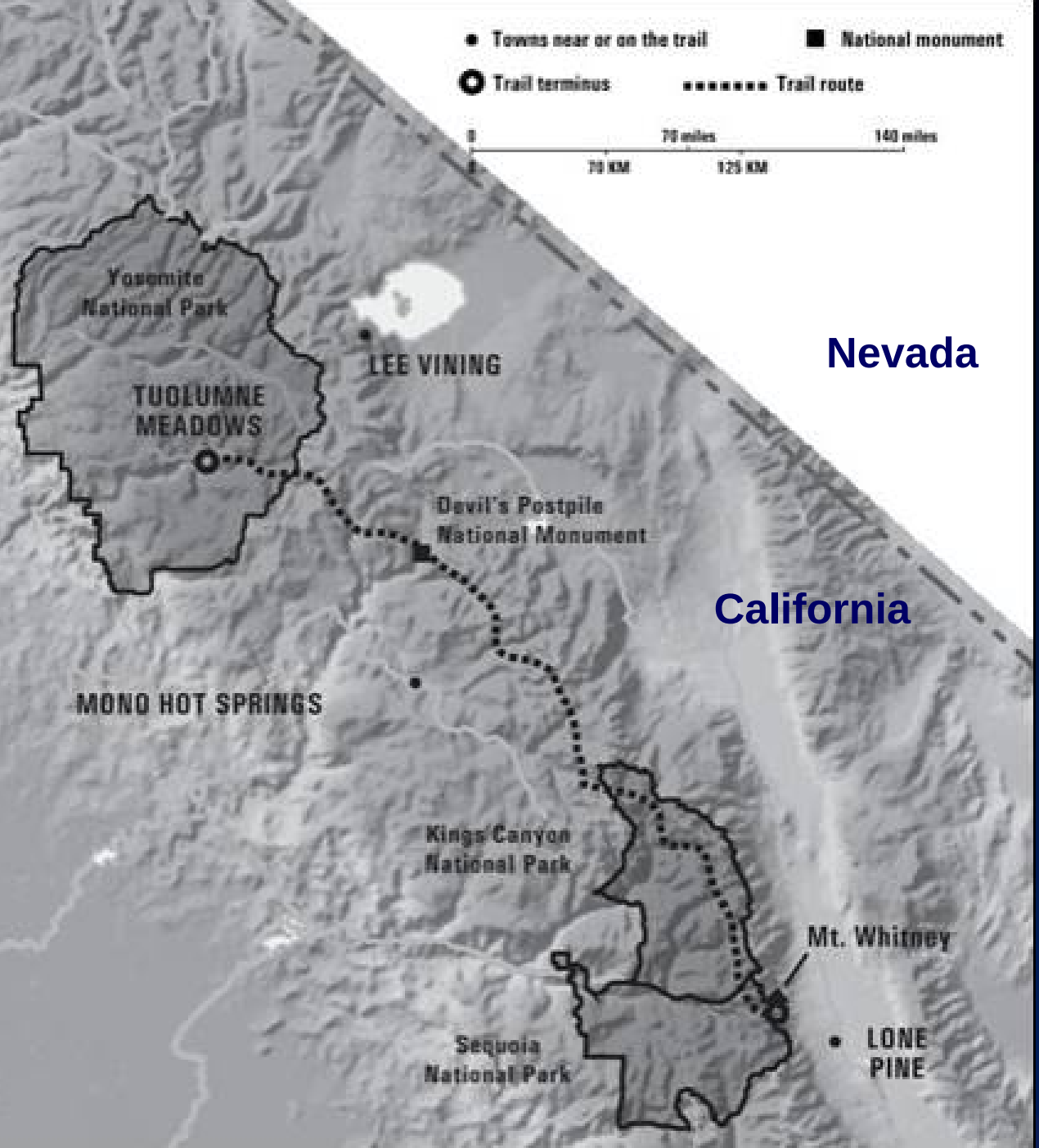

John Muir Trail: 219 miles from Yosemite Nat'l Park to Whitney Portal

7 days = ~31 miles/day

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Seven thoughts from the trail:

1. How'd I get into this?
2. Recruit the right team.
3. It's the environment!
4. Be willing to cross boundaries.
5. Devils in the details.
6. Everybody needs somebody, sometime.
7. What you think about when you have *plenty* of time to think . . .

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1. How did I get talked into this?

(My personal bias and a thought on why we're here).

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In over my head?

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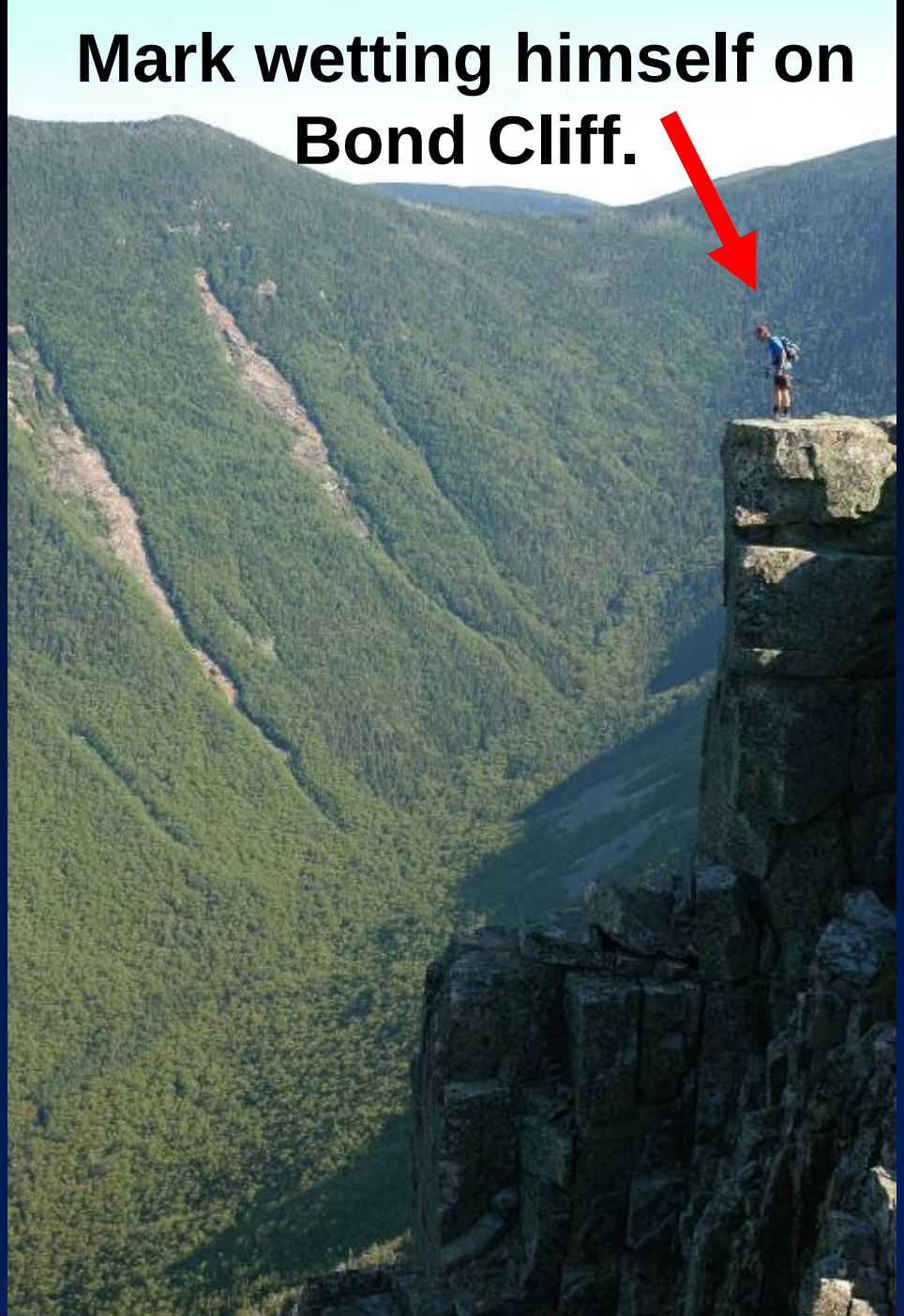

32-mile July training hike on the Appalachian Trail in NH's White Mountains.

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My admittedly unique perspective . . .

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Kodak Film

Surgeon General's Report 1996
Physical Activity Guidelines 2008

www.health.gov/paguidelines

- **150 minutes/week of moderate physical activity; more is better.**
- **Any activity is better than none.**
- **Can be broken up.**
- **300 min/week for children.**
- **Reduced risk for CVD, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, dementia in old age, clinical depression, a growing list of cancers.**

Getting some exercise, or just getting somewhere?

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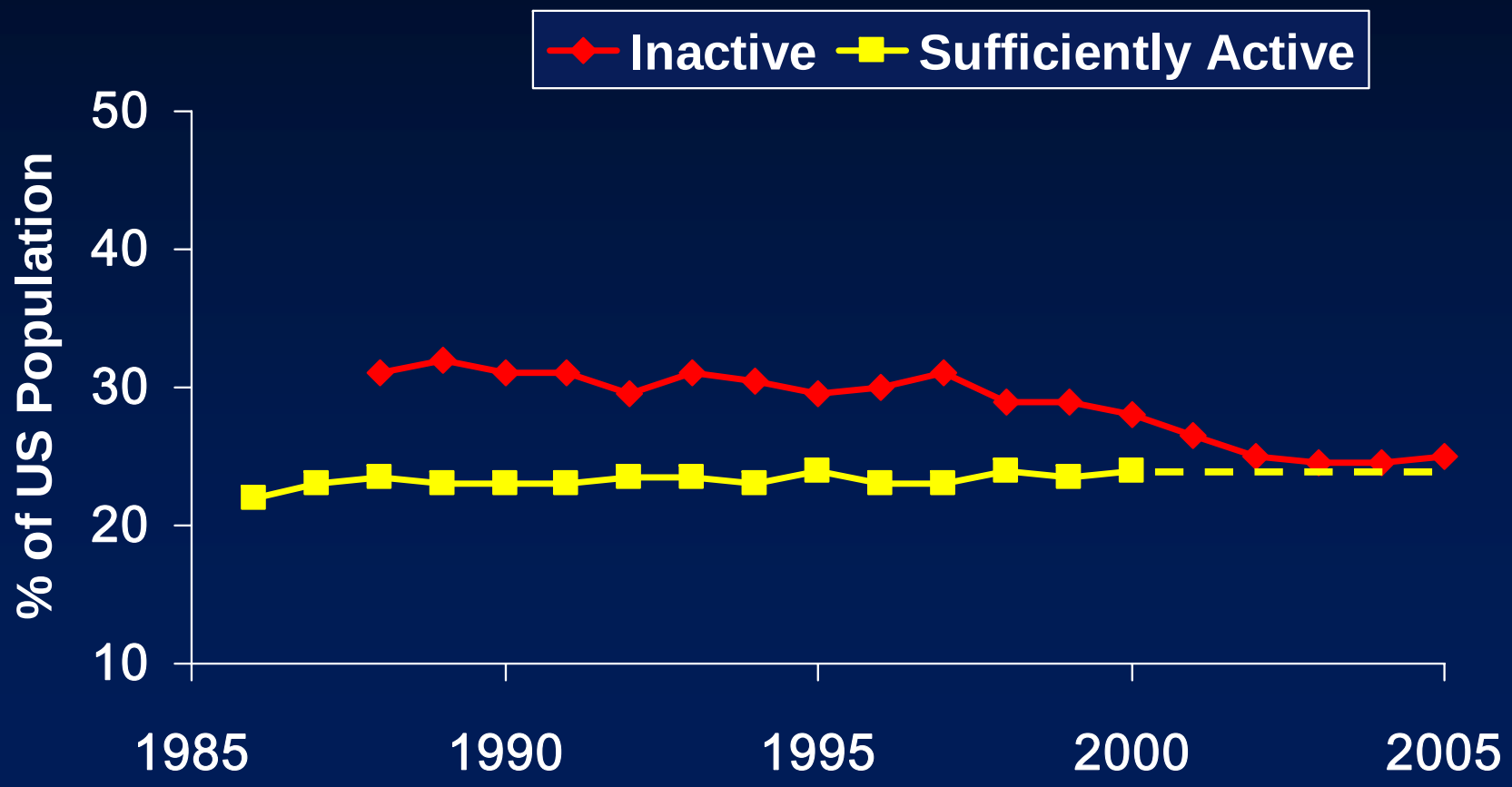
Leisure Time Physical Activity in the US

(MMWR: 50(09), 166-9; 54(39), 991-4)



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Our team was a *coalition of the willing* who embraced the vision.

You must start with a similar coalition to begin to build momentum.

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2. Recruit the right team.

(A stealth vs. bulk approach)

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Day 1, Yosemite Valley, 4:30 am.
Do we look nervous?

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Traveling light, fast, & efficient.

How can you be light, fast, and efficient, with so many partners:

- Schools
- Planning & Zoning
- Engineering, DPW
- Parks, Recreation
- Historical Society
- Public Health & Safety
- Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development
- Neighborhood Associations, Church Groups
- Environment, Conservation

Policy information:

www.lgc.org

www.vtpi.org

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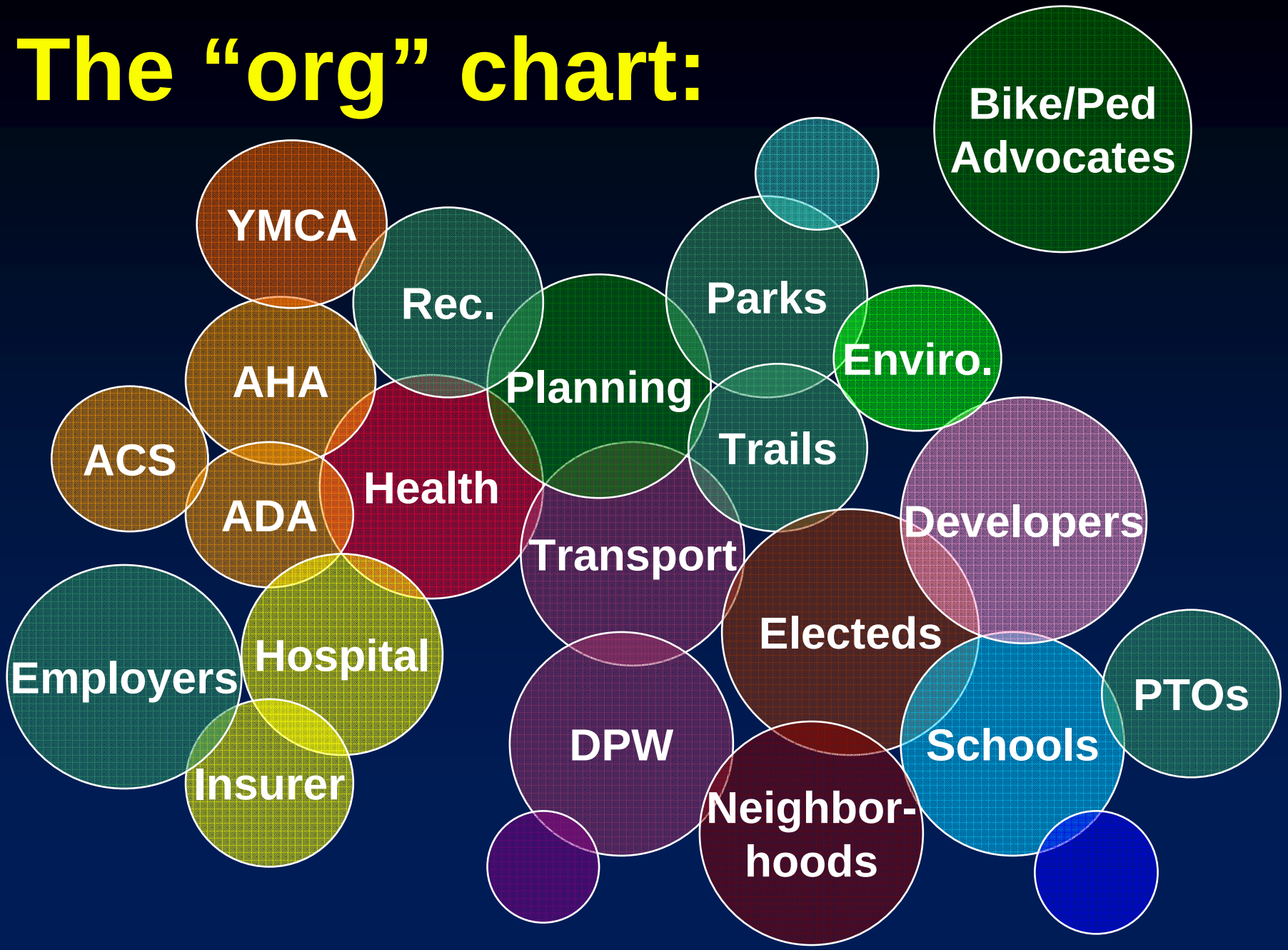
The “org” chart:



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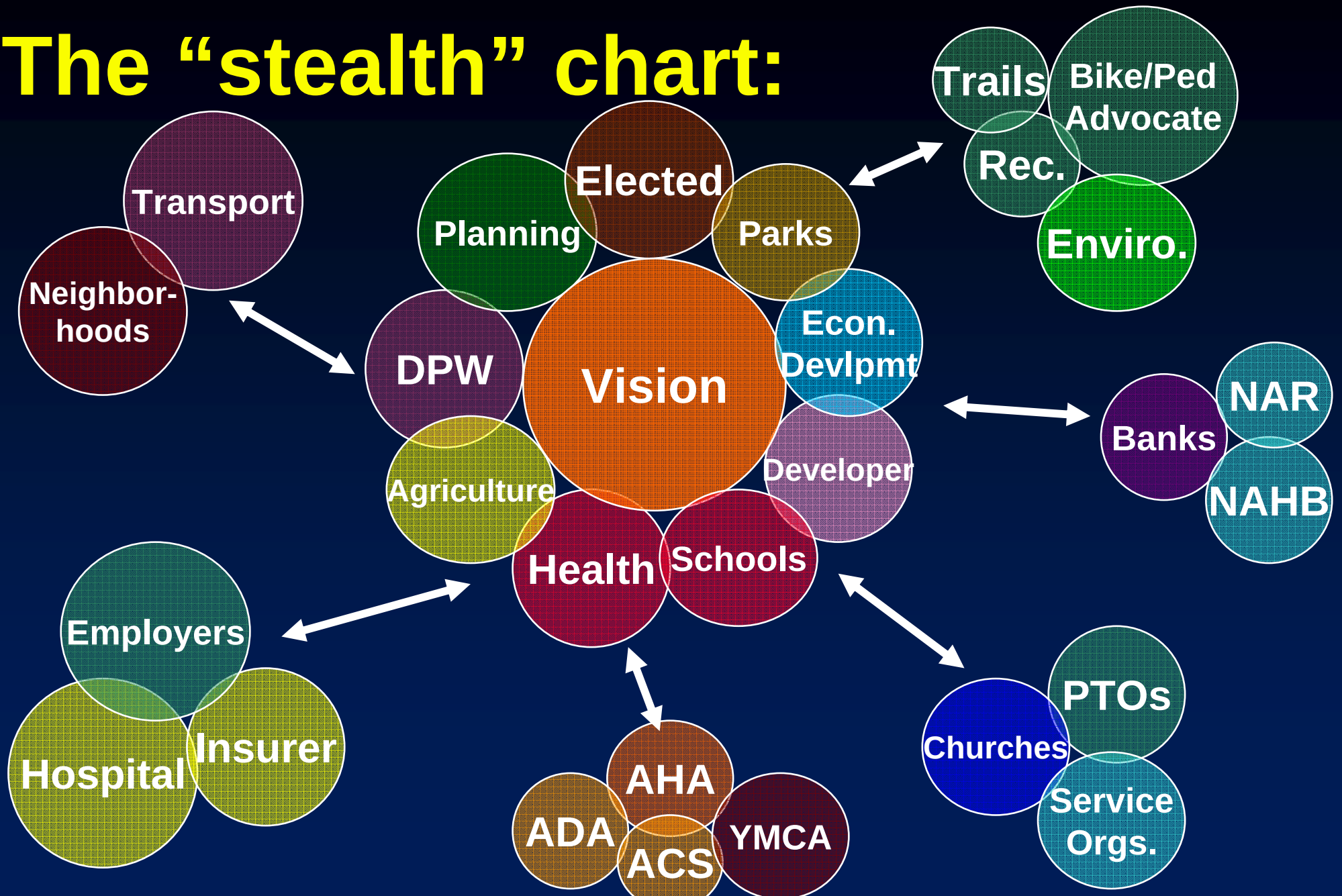
The “stealth” chart:



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To be on the stealth leadership team people must:

- Fully embrace the **vision** of active, healthy community design.
- Be able to spend time on this as part of **job responsibilities**; not just volunteers.
- Have **community influence** and be able to **reach** critical partners.

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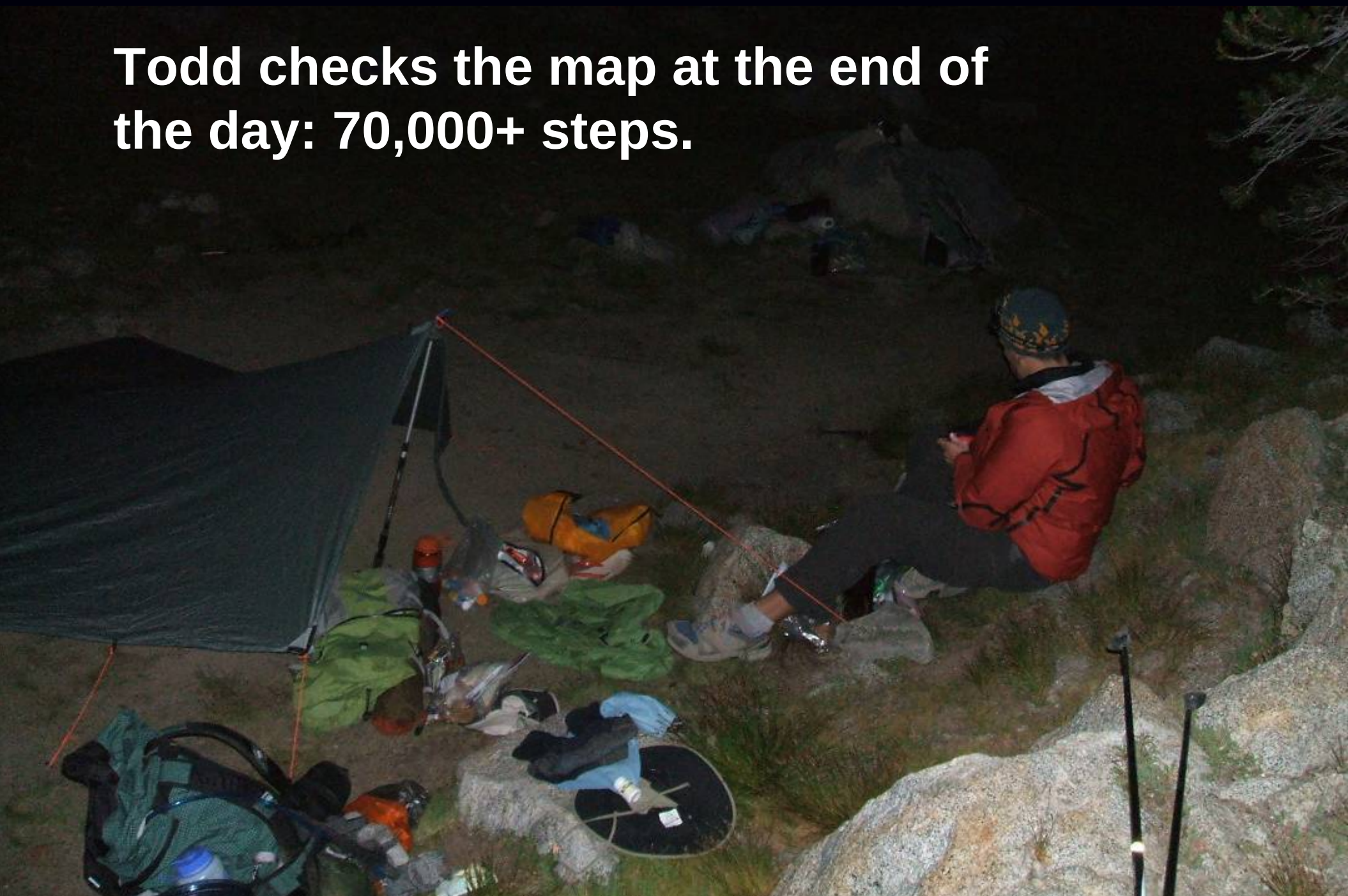
Todd checks the map at the end of
the day: 70,000+ steps.

3. The environment matters alot!

(But can we improve it?)

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But does our day-to-day environment matter?

Wichita

Rosedale, KC

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Overall what influences routine physical activity?

- Destinations within walk, bike, & transit distance?
- Sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, crossings?
- Inviting designs for bikes, pedestrians, & transit?
- Safe & accessible for all ages, abilities, incomes?

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1. Land use mix

Civic anchors in town.

e.g. post office, schools

Compact development & shared open space.

Multi-family, mixed-use.

Housing above, retail below.

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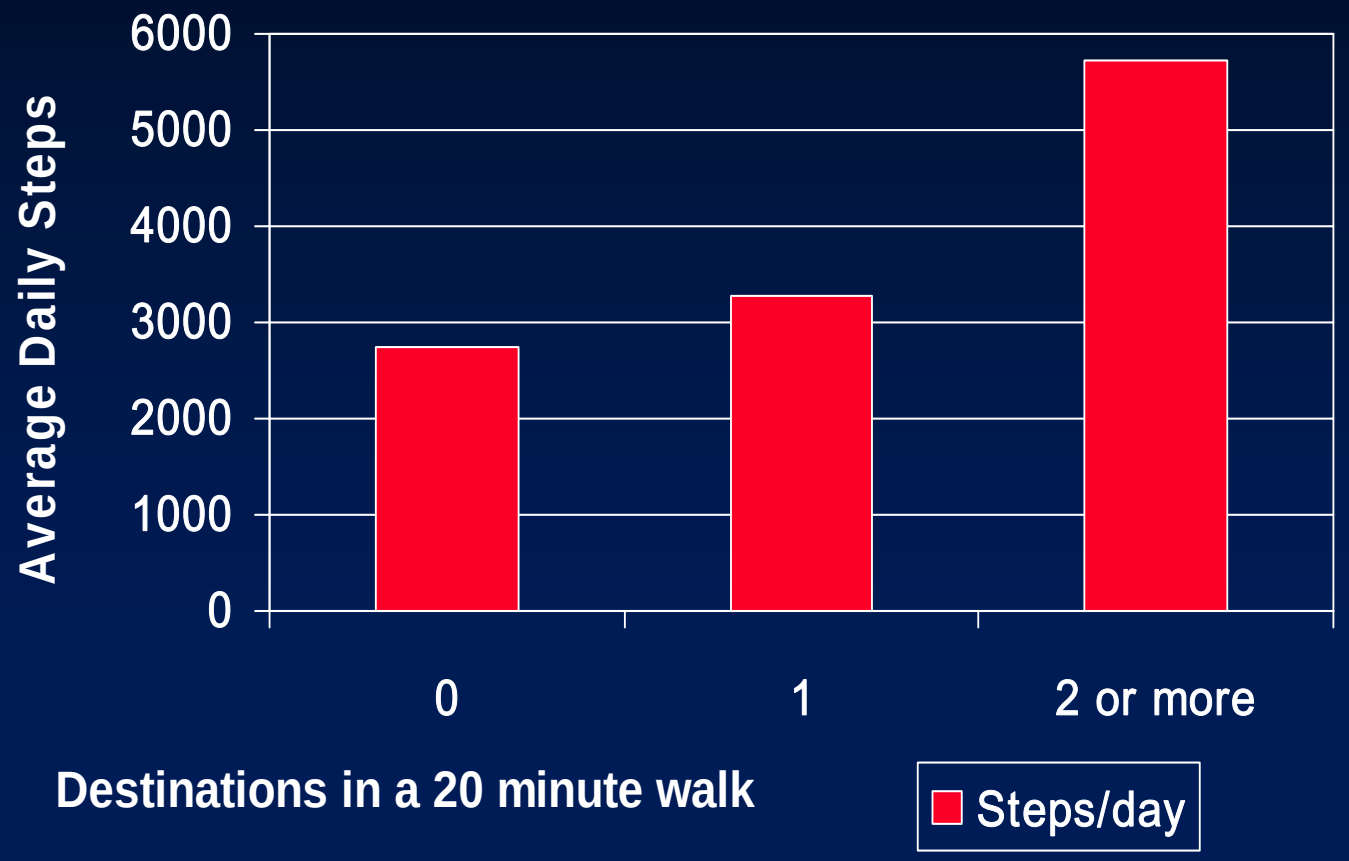
Convenience of Destinations and Walking for Older Women

King et.al., AJHP 18(1) Sep. 2003.



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2. Network of facilities:

- Presence of sidewalks, bike lanes, paths.
- Shorter blocks, more intersections, alleys.
- Access to trail, park, greenway, *transit*.

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Transit riders are physically active.

Besser, Dannenberg, Amer. J. Prev. Med., 29 (4), Nov. 2005.

Just during the daily walk to transit:

- Half of transit riders walk at least 19 mins.
- 29% get at least 30 mins. of activity.
- Minorities, poor (income <$15k/yr.), denser urban dwellers more likely to get 30+ mins./day.

A multi-modal trip

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Comfortable pedestrians? Drivers?

Spokane (Division)

Lincoln, NE

Arlington, VA

But how far back?

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Preferred sidewalk setback:

Even a bike lane adds buffer

1.0 Fenton minimum

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3. Site design:

Where would you find it more appealing to shop on foot or by bike?

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Site design that is inviting & functional:

- Pedestrian friendly architecture is near the street, accessible.
- Trees, benches, water, aesthetics, lighting, scale.
- Details: bike parking, open space, plantings, materials.

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4. Safety.

- Engineering can dramatically slow cars, improve safety.
- Increasing ped and bike trips *decreases* overall accident & fatality rates.

Curb extensions

Median islands

(Jacobsen P, *Injury Prevention*, 2003; 9:205-209.)

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Obesity Risk, Community Design, and Time Spent in Cars

Frank L, et.al. *Am. J. Prev. Med.*, June 2004

- 12.2% decrease in risk for each quartile increase in **land use mix** score.
- 6% increase in risk for **each additional hour** spent in a **motor vehicle**.

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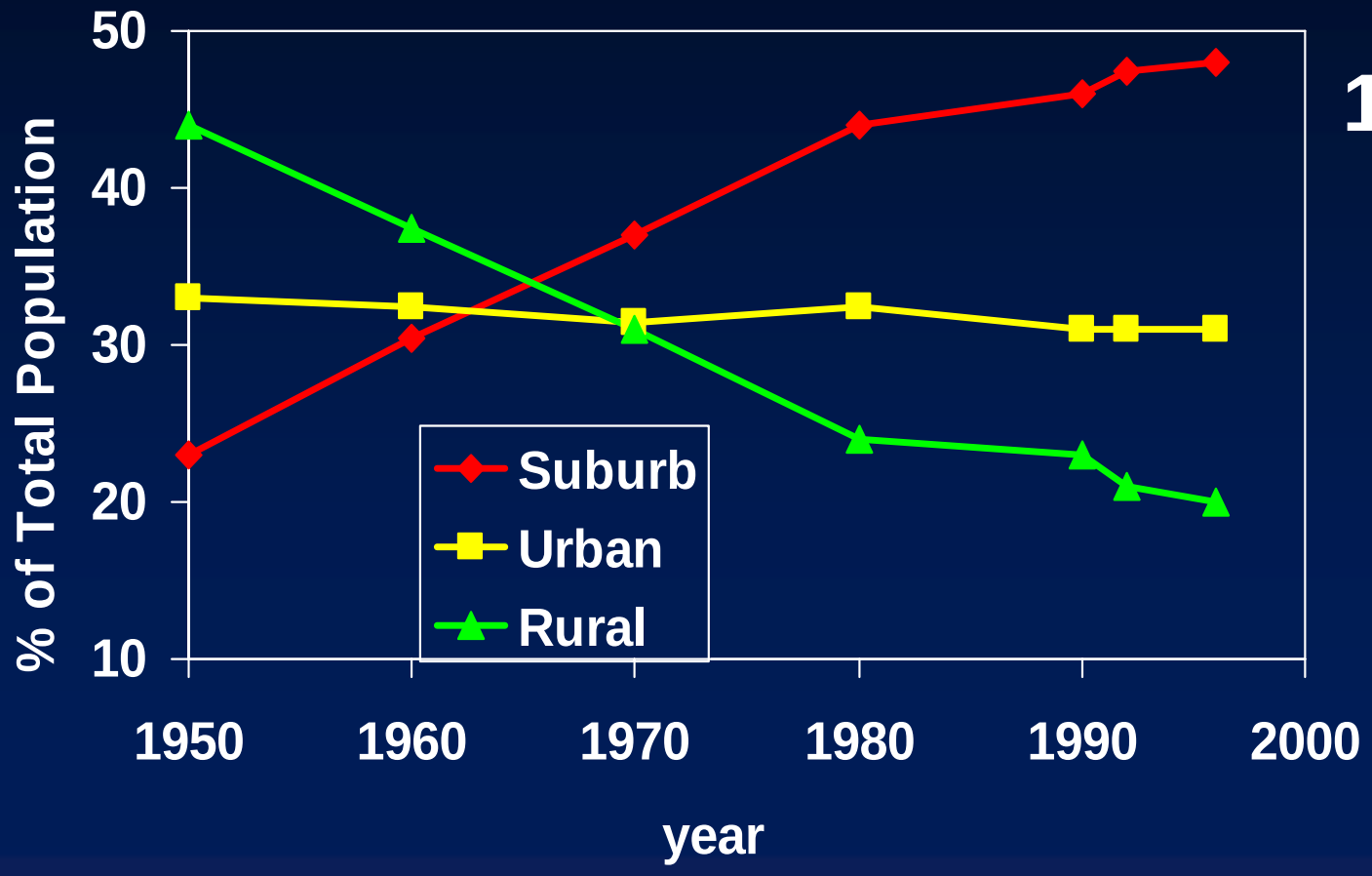
“Is it really an issue for rural areas . . . ?”

Suburbanization of America

US population shift, 1950-1996

(after *Bowling Alone*, R. Putnam, 2000)



1. Suburbia is steadily consuming the landscape . . .

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2. Rural areas are where we might affect the shape of development *before* it's done!

Columbus OH

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4. Work hard to cross boundaries.

(Both disciplinary & jurisdictional.)

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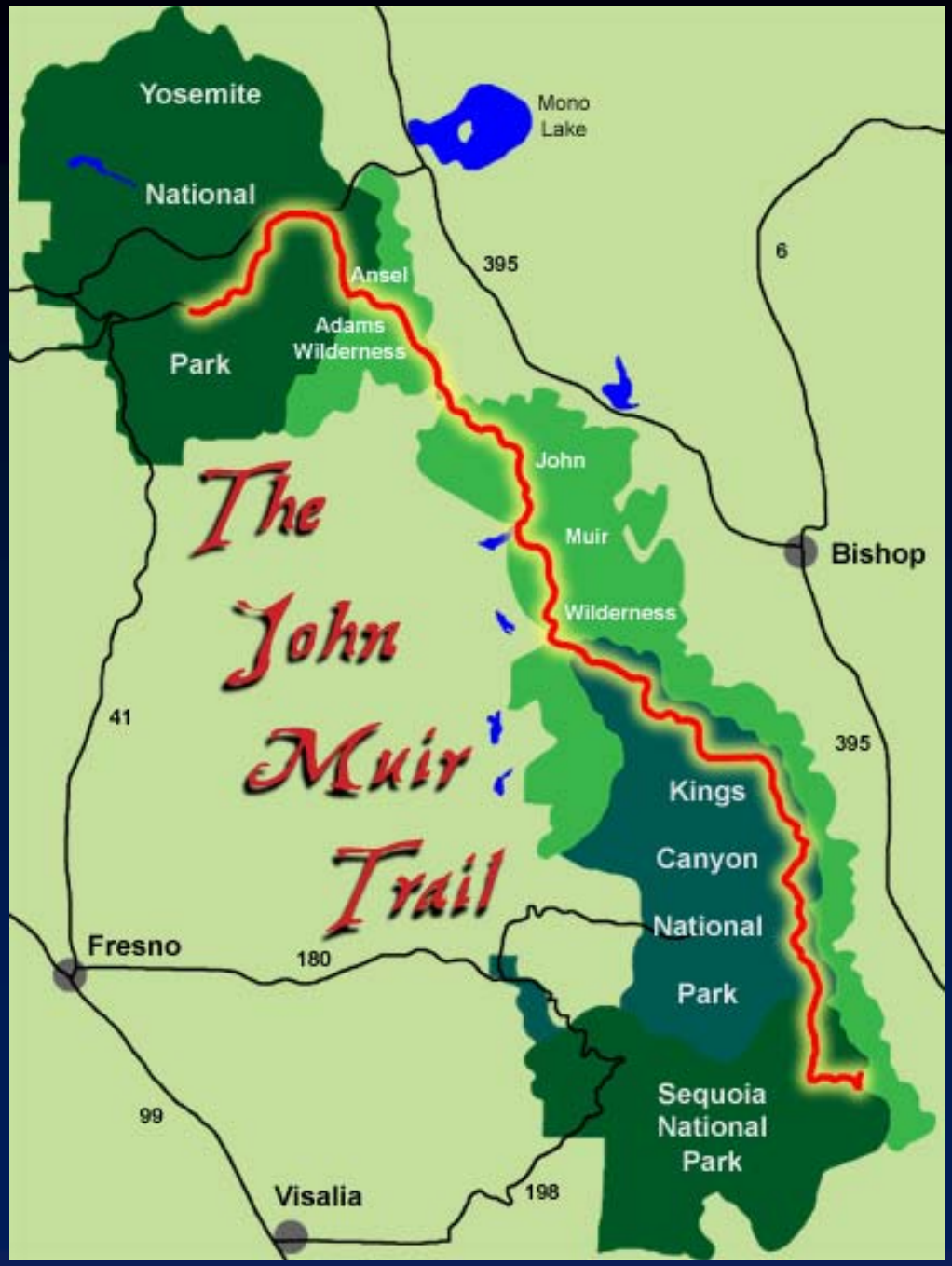

Yosemite N.P.
Ansel Adams Wilderness
Devil's Postpile N.M.
John Muir Wilderness
Kings Canyons N.P.
Sequoia N.P.

11 mountain passes, from 9,700' to 13,600' elevations.

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What about the boundaries that define our work?

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Sometimes they are mental . . .

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Most important:

Regional consistency, or developers will just jump across town & county lines.

Tools & incentives:

- **Decrease & share parking; maximum vs. minimum?**
- **Mixed-use, multi-story (overlay district?)**
- **Density bonuses.**
- **Expedite permits.**

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5. The Devils in the Details

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WARNING:

Do not look at next image if you're easily grossed out.

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Undone by dust!

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Design details matter for trails & active living community designs.

Cape Cod Rail Trail, MA

Richmond Canal Walk model locks.

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6. Everybody needs somebody sometime.

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The *indescribable* value of social support.

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Lessons from RWJF funded trail study

(Summarized in Mar. 2008 *Planning* magazine)

- Far more users in areas with **lots of connections**; streets, transit stops, other trails.
- Trail alignment has to go **close to destinations** (shops, restaurants, libraries, civic institutions).
- Design trail to be an **integral part of community life** , not an escape from it.

www.activelivingresearch.org

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Users -

Recreation only:	58%
Both rec & transport:	38%
Transport only:	4%

Overland Park

Trails aren't just recreation, transport corridors; they're "social venues."

Ratio of men:women

Isolated areas –	6:1
Connected –	2:1

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Bicycle network options:

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Kingsport Greenway

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7. What you think about when you have a *lot* of time to think . . .

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My editorial comment on the 3Ps:

- **Programs:** Don’t just target the recreation, outdoor crowd—create “functional” opportunities.
- **Projects:** Land use *and* networks; Small, local connections & destinations may matter most.
- **Policies:** Change the rules; require everything to be well-connected for bikes, peds, transit

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Programs:

Safe Routes to School
www.saferoutesinfo.org

Walking school busses, bicycle trains, safety education.

Worksite, community activity programs.

Active-commute incentives; E.g., Bike to work day, tax free transit pass, health benefit discount.

E.g., www.livehealthyAmerica.org

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Projects:

Bike lanes, narrowing, traffic calming, multi-use trails, lane reductions.

Walkable, bicycle-friendly community workshops, . . .

Bike parking, lockers, showers; walking paths, countdown timers.

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Schools: Siting, district lines, bus & driving policies.

DPW standards: snow removal, maintenance . . .

Policies

Zoning: Mixed use, site standards, setbacks, open space, *connectivity*.

Work sites: Health insurance, parking & transit, flex time, rewards.

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Interstitial trail, Lincoln, NE

Suburban greenbelt, Ames IA

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- Complete Streets Policy
- Appoint “alternative transport” coordinator.

All roadways to be designed for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, & drivers) of all ages & abilities.

www.completestreets.org

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The wild future of activity promotion.

- **Economic stimulus $.** Which infrastructure?
- **Transit funding.** Rail, bus, van & car pool.
- **Congestion charges.** Auto disincentive.
- **Tolls, parking, gas taxes?** Carrot & stick.
- **Insurance rewards** for active commuting.
- **National** Department of Active Travel?

- **3rd quarter 2008.**
  Auto miles ↓ 4.6%
  Transit use ↑ 6.5%

www.apta.org

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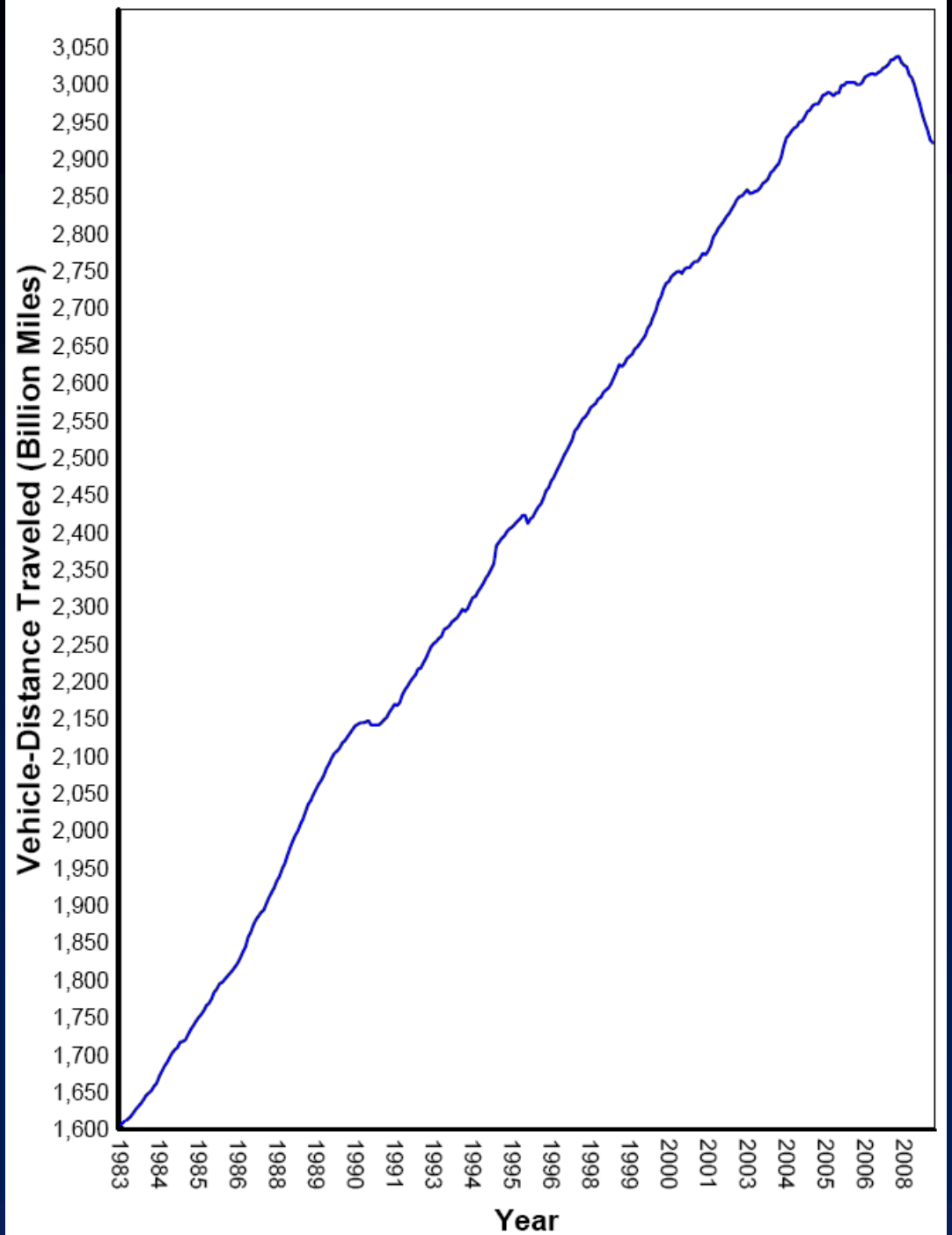

US Total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT); moving 12-month total, by year

2007-2008

VMT: - 3.6%

Transit use: + 4%

www.fhwa.dot.gov

www.apta.com

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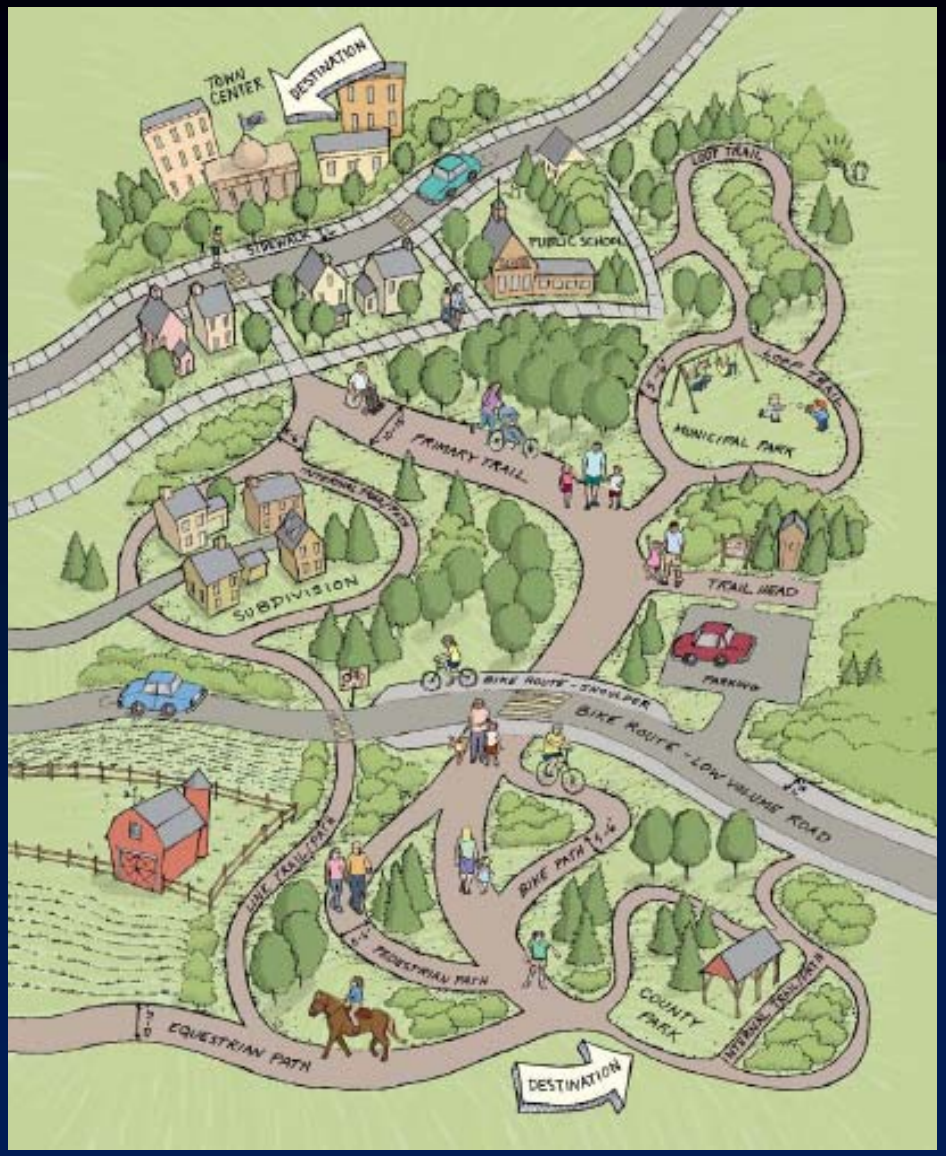
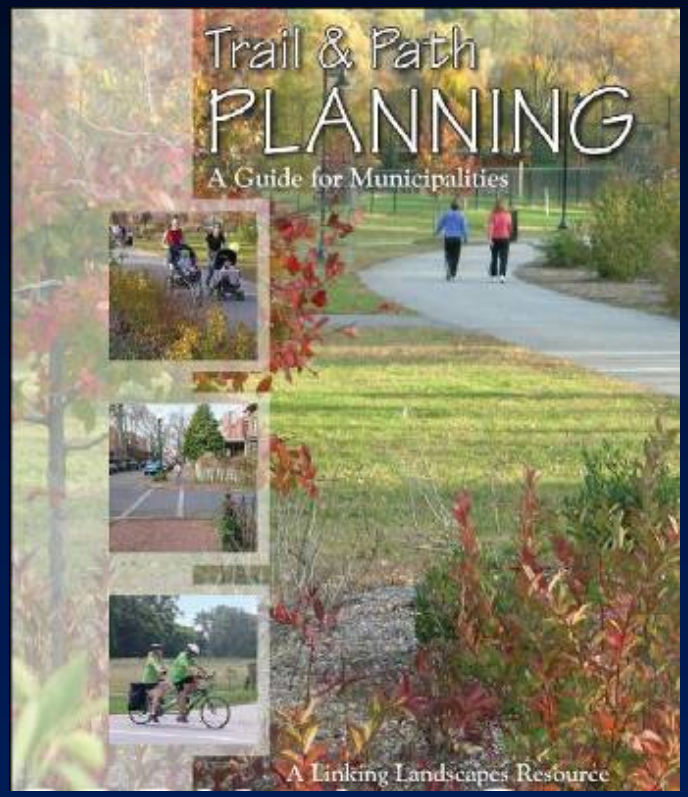


Chester County PA:

Trail & Path Planning Guide for Municipalities



http://dsf.chesco.org/planning

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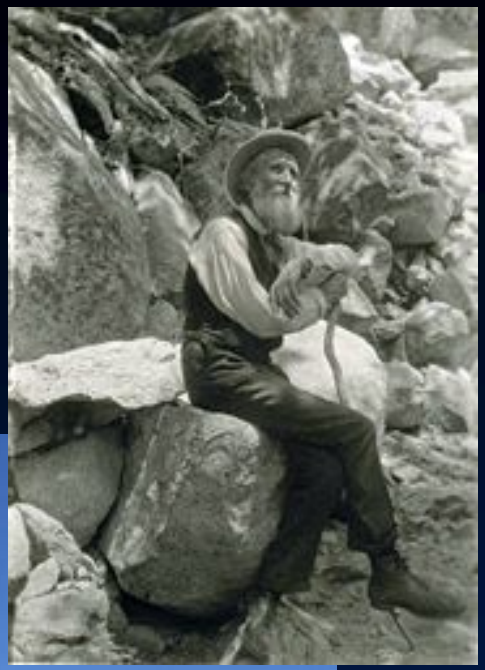
The stone shelter on Muir Pass.



A reminder of the power of advocacy.

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The big JMT lesson . . .

The ability to pursue the adventures of an active lifestyle, whether big or small, is its own reward!

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Where is networking exercise heading? Goal: Meet colleagues, start imagining collaboration. By 4:30 pm Friday be able to share in just 2 minutes:

1. One or two missing partners or entities you'd add to your "team" to increase effectiveness.
2. A specific project or policy you'd like to advance and how health & built environment partners will both have roles.

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For example . . .

Partners: County planning dept. & local farmland trust.

Goal: Launch community gardens along the Kingsport trail (environ.) and launch adopt-a-garden vegetable growing program (health).

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Partners: Regional office of state DOT; regional chamber of commerce.

Goal: Fund & complete regional trail loop (environ.) and recruit corporate wellness/benefits programs to create connector trails (health).

E.g.,

- LL Bean in Brunswick, ME
- Thrivent in Appleton, WI
- Crum Assoc., Dunedin, FL

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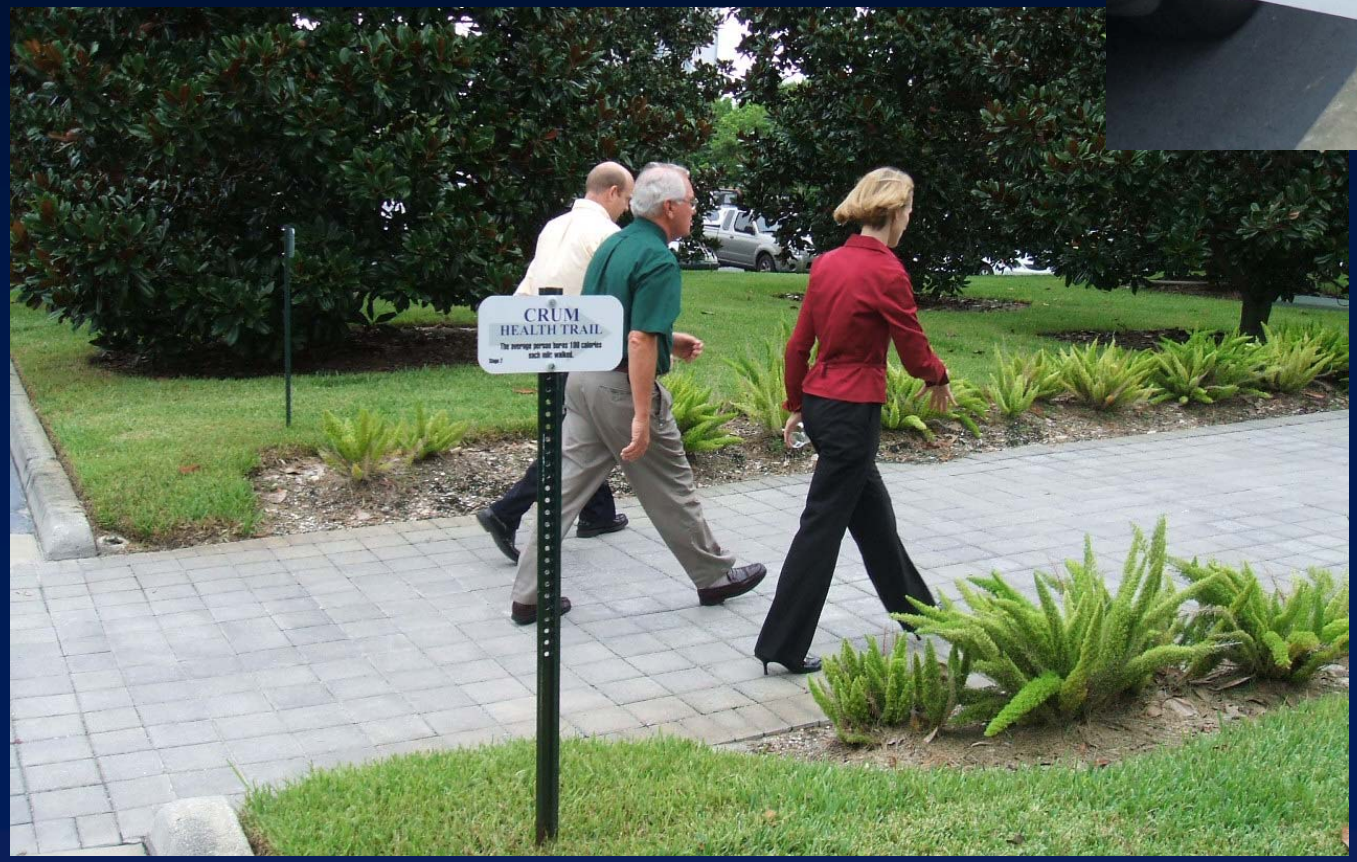
Employees on a formal physical activity break at Crum Assoc., Dunedin, FL



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