

2: Data Collection

The Benchmarking team began in the fall of 2006 by identifying which variables to collect and potential sources for this information. The team created a collection tool in spreadsheet format for gathering data on all 50 states and the 50 most-populated cities (from the 2005 American Community Survey). Data that could be gathered from national sources and those that would require surveys were identified. Each potential source of data was noted where available.

National Data Sources

National data sources utilized for this report include:

- Census (2000)
- American Community Survey (ACS) (2005)
- National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) (2001-2002)
- National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (2001-2006)
- Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) (2003-2005)
- Web-based Injury Statistics Query & Reporting System (WISQARS) (2002-2004)
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) (2005)
- National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) (2005)
- National Health and Nutrition Examination Study (NHANES) (2005-2006)
- United States Historical Climatology Network (USHCN)

A discussion of the drawbacks to some of these national sources can be found in the following chapters. These sources are identified throughout the report with accompanying data. An overview of the data sources used in this report can be found in Appendix 1 on page 106.

City, State & Organization Surveys

Many variables this report measures are not currently available from national data sources. Measures of miles of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, staffing levels, and policies to increase bicycling, for example, are not currently collected by a single national agency. Because of the lack of aggregated data in these areas, Thunderhead relies on surveys of advocates and government officials.

Thunderhead Alliance developed three surveys for the purpose of this report. A State Survey asked for information including safety statistics, funding and staffing at the state level, state-wide policies, and bike access on state-operated trains. A City Survey asked for similar information, but also included questions on local bicycle and pedestrian facilities, planned facilities, local funding, bicycle parking and transit connectivity. A Thunderhead Organization Survey, for Thunderhead Alliance member organizations representing a state or one of the 50 cities studied here, asked organizations for information such as their population served, revenue sources, number of members, staffing levels, and media impressions.

Survey Distribution and Collection

The surveys were sent to leaders of Thunderhead organizations, government officials, and advocates around the country in December 2006. Because the leaders of Thunderhead organizations could tap their existing relationships with local government officials, they were able to ensure the surveys made the rounds with the correct government officials to collect as much of the requested data as possible. Surveys were completed by Thunderhead leaders, Department of Transportation staff, Metropolitan Planning Organization staff, and city officials. In many cases the surveys required

input from multiple agencies because the requested data was not easily accessible in one place. The project team reached out to survey respondents through April 2007, with the final data for the report coming in early May. The team then entered survey results into the collection tool and analyzed it for quality control.

Obstacles

Among the obstacles encountered with data collection were lack of available or collected data, inaccessibility of data, advocates who could not access officials, and inability of officials to provide data. Some cities and states may not have collected data that surveys requested such as miles of sidewalks or number of bike parking spaces. In other cases, data may exist but be inaccessible to officials or advocates who could not locate the data or had trouble getting the data from the agency who keeps it. Because this project relied on local advocates to assist in the data collection, there were cases where advocates could not access officials and times when officials were unwilling to respond to survey questions. Lack of time was the most common reason cited for these cases where surveys were returned incomplete. These obstacles are evident throughout the report and noted with asterisks to illuminate the challenges advocates and officials face with accessing data on bicycling and walking.

Scope of Data Collection

Data collection efforts were focused on all 50 states and the 50 most-populated U.S. cities. One un-solicited City Survey was received from Amarillo, TX and so Amarillo was included in all areas with relevant data. Data was not completed for all areas in each state and city. In some cases, State and City Surveys were incomplete and in some cases, national data sets had insufficient data for a few cities. The reason for missing data was noted in the data tables in each chapter and in some cases accompanying data illustrations. In Chapter 6, only data for states and cities with Thunderhead member organizations representing them were shown. In addition, for this section,

Thunderhead Alliance member organizations who represent a location other than the top 50 most-populated cities were invited to submit their organization's information for comparison. Thunderhead received six additional Thunderhead Organization Surveys from organizations representing areas outside the scope of other chapters. These are included in Chapter 6.

Overview of Scope of Data Collection

50 cities included in this report (most to least populated)

New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, Dallas, San Jose, Detroit, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, San Francisco, Columbus, Austin, Memphis, Baltimore, Fort Worth, Charlotte, El Paso, Milwaukee, Seattle, Boston, Denver, Louisville, Washington, Nashville, Las Vegas, Portland, Oklahoma City, Tucson, Albuquerque, Long Beach, Atlanta, Fresno, Sacramento, New Orleans, Cleveland, Kansas City (MO), Mesa (AZ), Virginia Beach, Omaha, Oakland, Miami, Tulsa, Honolulu, Minneapolis, Colorado Springs, Arlington (TX)

Additional cities included in parts of this report:

Amarillo, TX

States without state-wide advocacy organizations:

Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wyoming

Study area cities without a dedicated advocacy organization:

Phoenix, San Antonio, Detroit, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Memphis, El Paso, Las Vegas, Oklahoma City, Tucson, Fresno, Cleveland, Mesa (AZ), Virginia Beach, Omaha, Miami, Tulsa, Honolulu, Arlington (TX)

Locations of organizations included in Chapter 6 of this report that are not one of the 50 focus-cities:

Juneau, AK; Salt Lake City, UT; Jackson Hole, WY; Central CT; Central Yavapai, AZ; Central AR

Note: Oakland and Louisville have dedicated Thunderhead organizations but the organizations declined to be included in this report.