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Ciclovía Initiatives: Engaging Communities, Partners, and Policy Makers Along the Route to Success

Susan G. Zieff PhD

San Francisco State University, Dept. of Kinesiology

J. Aaron Hipp

Washington University in St. Louis, Brown School, ahipp@wustl.edu

Amy A. Eyler

Washington University in St. Louis, Brown School, aeyley@wustl.edu

Mi-Sook Kim PhD

San Francisco State University, Dept. of Kinesiology

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1 **Title: Ciclovía initiatives: challenges along the route to success**

2 Authors:

3 Susan G. Zieff, Ph.D., Professor

4 Department of Kinesiology

5 Active Living Across the Lifespan Research Group

6 San Francisco State University

7 1600 Holloway Ave.

8 San Francisco, CA 94132

9

10 Aaron Hipp, Ph.D.,

11 Assistant Professor, Brown School

12 Investigator, Prevention Research Center in St. Louis

13 Scholar, Institute for Public Health

14 Washington University in St. Louis

15 Goldfarb Hall 352

16 Campus Box 1196

17 One Brookings Drive

18 St. Louis, MO 63130

19

20 Amy A. Eyler, PhD, CHES

21 Assistant Professor, Brown School

22 Investigator, Prevention Research Center in St. Louis

23 Scholar, Institute for Public Health

24 Washington University in St. Louis

25 Brown Hall 112

26 Campus Box 1196

27 One Brookings Drive

28 St. Louis, MO 63130

1 Mi-Sook Kim, Ph.D., Professor
2 Department of Kinesiology
3 Active Living Across the Lifespan Research Group
4 San Francisco State University
5 1600 Holloway Ave.
6 San Francisco, CA 94132

7

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1 Abstract:

2 Context: Recent efforts to increase physical activity through changes to the built environment have led
3 to strategies and programs that use existing public space including bicycle lanes, temporary parks and
4 the ciclovia initiative (scheduled events in which streets are closed to motorized vehicles and opened for
5 recreational activities) popularized in South America.

6 Objective: The current paper describes and compares the processes and structures involved in
7 developing and implementing a ciclovia-type program in two U.S. urban contexts: San Francisco,
8 California, and St. Louis, Missouri. Considering the current growth of and interest in ciclovia initiatives,
9 important outcomes, lessons learned are offered for application in other, similar settings.

10 Design: Primary sources from both initiatives and from published research on ciclovias constitute the
11 body of evidence and include: year-end reports, grant applications, meeting minutes, budgets, published
12 ciclovia guidelines, evaluation studies and websites, media sources and interviews and personal
13 communication with the organizers.

14 Main Outcome Measures: Primary source documents were reviewed and included in this analysis if they
15 offered information on three grounded questions: What processes were used in developing the
16 initiative? What are the current structures and practices used in implementation of initiatives? What are
17 important lessons learned and best practices from initiatives for recommendations to stakeholders and
18 policy-makers in other contexts?

19 Results: Among the categories compared, the structures and processes for implementation regarding
20 buy-in and city department collaboration, route selection, programming, partnerships, media
21 promotion, community outreach and merchant support were relatively similar among the two
22 initiatives. The categories that differed included staffing and volunteer engagement and funding.

23 Conclusion: Buy-in from community partners, merchants, residents and city agencies are critical for a
24 positive experience in developing and implementing ciclovia-type initiatives in urban environments.
25 When funding and staffing are inconsistent or limited, the quality and sustainability of the initiative is
26 less certain.

27

1 Ciclovía initiatives: engaging communities, partners and policymakers along the route to success

2 **Introduction**

3 Recent efforts to increase physical activity through changes to the built environment have led to
4 various strategies and programs that use existing public space including bicycle lanes, temporary
5 parks and the ciclovía initiative (regularly scheduled events in which a network of streets are
6 closed to motorized vehicles and opened for bicycling and other recreational activities)¹
7 popularized in South American cities such as Bogotá, Colombia.² The ciclovía* holds promise as a
8 large-scale intervention that corresponds to The Community Guide recommendations for
9 increasing access to places for physical activity and providing informational outreach.³⁻⁴ Recent
10 analysis of four global ciclovía programs suggests that health benefits of these initiatives outweigh
11 their costs.⁵ Ciclovía-type events are growing in popularity, both in number of events nationally
12 (over 70 different US cities hosted a ciclovía between 2009 and 2012⁶⁻⁷) and worldwide, and in the
13 number of participants (up to 1.5 million per event in Bogotá).²

14 The Alliance for Biking and Walking joined forces with OpenStreetsProject.org, a website to
15 exchange information, on how to develop and implement ciclovías whose unique processes and
16 structures typically require collaborations between community stakeholders, advocates and
17 government leaders.⁸ The Open Streets Project developed a 7-model typology to define ciclovía
18 initiatives according to characteristics including: population, lead organizing entity, funding, route
19 type, setting, length and activities.⁶ Scholars have begun to conduct evaluations of both process and
20 outcomes of ciclovía initiatives nationally and internationally.^{4,9}

21 **Purpose of this project:**

* There are many U.S. names for ciclovía initiatives (e.g. Sunday Streets, Open Streets, Summer Streets, Sunday Parkways). For the purposes of this paper, we will refer to all initiatives as ciclovías.

1 The purpose of this paper is to describe the development and implementation of two urban
2 ciclovias representing different models according to the Open Streets Project typology: Sunday
3 Streets,** San Francisco, California (San Francisco Model), and Open Streets, St. Louis, Missouri
4 (Portland Model). An analysis of these two initiatives offers important outcomes and lessons for
5 application in other contexts nationally and internationally.

6 **Methods**

7 Sunday Streets and Open Streets were selected for comparison based on differences in model: San
8 Francisco Model (San Francisco: public/non-profit led; public/privately funded) and Portland
9 Model (St. Louis: publicly led; public/privately funded).⁶ University researchers have evaluated
10 Sunday Streets since 2009 and Open Streets since 2010. Due to the descriptive nature of the
11 present study, primary sources from organizations in both cities and from published research on
12 ciclovias, constitute the body of evidence (see Table 1). The following primary source documents
13 were collected: a.) Project-based documents (e.g. year-end reports); b.) Published ciclovía
14 guidelines, (e.g. Ciclovía Recreativa: Implementation and Advocacy Manual¹⁰); evaluation studies
15 (e.g. CDC evaluability study¹¹) and websites; c.) Traditional media and social media sources (e.g.
16 Facebook); and d.) Communications with the organizers. Primary source documents were included
17 in this analysis to address three grounded questions: What processes were used in developing the
18 initiative? What are the current structures and practices used in implementation of initiatives?
19 What are important lessons learned from initiatives for recommendations to potential organizers in
20 other contexts?

21 **Development of Sunday Streets and Open Streets**

** Sunday Streets SF refers to the non-profit organization; Sunday Streets are the specific events.

1 Both Sunday Streets and Open Streets were initiated to promote cycling among city residents. The
2 City and County of San Francisco began “Car-Free Sundays” by closing a section of Golden Gate Park
3 in 1967 for biking, jogging and other recreational activities. By 2006, park use on Sundays was
4 216% of the use on Saturdays encouraging advocates to begin to push for—and achieve in 2007—
5 additional closure on Saturdays.¹² In 2008, Mayor Gavin Newsom and the San Francisco Bicycle
6 Coalition (SFBC) sought to promote bicycle use among ethnic minority and low-income city
7 residents—historically under-represented park users—to implement a ciclovia in the city. Staff
8 from the Mayor’s Office, SFBC, Livable City (a transportation and land use advocacy non-profit)
9 developed the initial launch of Sunday Streets, but soon established a non-profit entity, Sunday
10 Streets SF, to collaborate with city agencies and private and non-profit organizations to manage the
11 initiative. Livable City also serves as the project’s fiscal agent.¹¹ The Department of Public Health
12 active living collaborative, Shape Up SF, was a partner in Sunday Streets’ first year. In September
13 2009, Mayor Newsom announced that Sunday Streets was to become a “permanent program”¹³ and
14 by 2010 Sunday Streets became institutionalized as a monthly program from March through
15 October with the Municipal Transportation Agency as a main fiscal sponsor⁶

16 In St. Louis, the Bicycle Implementation Group within the Mayor’s Office proposed a
17 recreational event in 2009 to highlight the short distance (<2.5 miles) and ease of bicycle travel
18 between the city’s two largest parks, Forest and Tower Grove Parks (1371 and 289 acres,
19 respectively).¹⁴ When the original plan faced difficulties in implementation, the group, familiar with
20 ciclovias in Colombia, New York, and San Francisco, elected for a longer route (six miles) between
21 Forest Park and the heart of downtown to the east. With funding from Boeing and Anthem Blue
22 Cross Blue Shield, the city (including the Police and Special Events Departments) worked with a
23 local active living advocacy organization, Trailnet, to produce four ‘Open Streets’ events in 2010.
24 There was enough funding from the first four events to largely pay for two additional events in fall
25 2011.¹⁵ Three key members of the original Bicycle Implementation Group are no longer with the

1 city and the champion within the Mayor's office has changed. The current champion, a lifelong
2 resident of St. Louis, and his team have shifted the focus of Open Streets from a bicycle-centric
3 initiative of four-plus miles, to a local, neighborhood initiative of 1.5 – 2.0 miles in length.¹⁶

4 Buy-in and City Department Collaboration

5 Cooperation between City departments, government agencies and local non-profits has been a
6 feature of the organization and implementation of both programs. Sunday Streets SF reports that in
7 addition to the official sponsorship of the Mayor's Office, the San Francisco Municipal
8 Transportation Authority (SFMTA; delivers staff leadership, support for permits, staff at events and
9 high level marketing) and the fiscal sponsorship of Livable City, city departments who contributed
10 to Sunday Streets include: Mayor's Office: Economic Development (staff and financial support;
11 Press office for media outreach, political leadership for program support); Environment, SF Arts
12 Commission (program assistance), Public Works (equipment delivery, use and pick-up, route
13 cleaning post-event), Recreation and Parks (use of facilities and properties, staffing during events,
14 marketing support), Public Health with Shape Up SF (financial and staff support), and the Police.¹⁷
15 In 2009, a Memorandum Of Understanding developed between city departments reduced
16 uncertainty about delivery of (in-kind) services such as staffing and resources (e.g. intersection
17 crossing cones).¹⁸ Other government agencies involved include: the Port of San Francisco,
18 Redevelopment Agency, and the National Park Service. Additional support comes from SF Bicycle
19 Coalition (coordinators of the volunteer program) and the YMCA of SF (programming).¹⁹

20 Five different city departments provided support before or during Open Streets: St. Louis
21 Metropolitan Police, City Special Events, Streets, Health, and Parks, Recreation and Forestry. With
22 the current focus on shorter, localized events, neighborhood associations were also integral
23 collaborators. Neighborhood and local business associations have petitioned for an Open Streets
24 with route suggestions and communication assistance. Additional support, guidance and day-of

1 activities were provided by Trailnet, Great Rivers Greenway District (regional public entity) and the
2 YMCA. Finally, AmeriCorps volunteers and university interns provided much free or cheap staffing
3 in exchange for the educational opportunities associated with service learning and evaluation.

4 In addition, the St. Louis Board of Public Service and Grace Hill community health centers provided
5 support through the Bicycle Implementation Group. The local Council on Government, East-West
6 Gateway, supported Open Streets via their Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Council, and Trailnet and St.
7 Louis University steer a collaborative network, Livable St. Louis, which continues to support all
8 local efforts to create a more livable city.

9 **Current Structures and Processes Used in Implementation**

10 Sunday Streets and Open Streets both aim to increase opportunities for recreation and other
11 healthy behaviors and connect communities while supporting economic vitality through livability
12 measures. (See Table 2) Route selection is an important feature for implementing these goals while
13 reaching targeted populations.

14 Route Selection and Implementation

15 Sunday Streets has expanded each year since it began in 2008 with its current emphasis on
16 continued use of the longer routes (>3 miles). (See Table 3) A pilot program is being conducted in
17 2012 to develop a permanent, sustainable route and provide the opportunity for study of the
18 program's impact and sustainability.²⁰ The selected route will be the site of 4 events and meets the
19 criteria set forth in the directive (e.g. well-served by bike-ready transit; creates open space in a
20 community that is "park poor"; located where there is merchant support and connects multiple
21 neighborhoods).²⁰ Routes are initially selected to support the project's goals by examining City of
22 San Francisco public health data²¹ to identify neighborhoods associated with chronic disease
23 burden; open space/park availability by neighborhood; income/poverty rates using U.S. Census

1 data and ethnic minority populations. The actual streets used for each route are coordinated to run
2 close to public transit and to avoid re-routing public transit. Due to the popularity of the events
3 (and a specific request from residents of a predominantly African American community residing
4 near one route to allow church-goers longer access), the hours were shifted from the original 9:00
5 a.m.-1:00 p.m. to 11:00-4:00.²⁰

6 Open Streets began in 2010 with four, 6-mile events held from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. focusing on ease
7 of travel between two specific urban destinations. In 2011 and 2012, Open Streets offered two
8 shorter events with reduced hours (9am – 1pm). The 2011 and 2012 routes were determined
9 based on neighborhood requests following the successful first event in 2010 and were associated
10 with neighborhood street fairs and farmer’s markets. These four Open Streets events preceded the
11 street fairs with the goal of funneling participants from Open Streets into the specific
12 neighborhoods. With the neighborhood events as one terminus, the City and Trailnet worked to
13 incorporate existing bike lanes and greenways as the opposite terminus.

14 In addition to crossing multiple neighborhoods and incorporating existing events, each Open
15 Streets has used streets with bike lanes. Each event has also terminated either at a large park or a
16 greenway to better accommodate cyclists looking for longer rides. Open Streets have been
17 accessible via bus at each event, but have only been accessible via lightrail (MetroLink) at four
18 events.

19 Staffing, Volunteer Engagement and Programming

20 Staff and volunteer capacity operate differently between Sunday Streets and Open Streets. Sunday
21 Streets has 2 full-time paid staff members--a Project Director and Program Assistant--as well as a
22 logistics team (responsible for route planning, event schedules, permits, traffic safety, detours,
23 public safety tasks) and volunteer program coordinator. In collaboration with the SFBC, a volunteer
24 program was established in 2009. Staff members currently include a Volunteer Coordinator

1 (responsible for recruiting, training more than 600 volunteers for public safety and event support,
2 placing 100-150 at each event), and four paid Volunteer Program Interns to supervise volunteers
3 on-site.¹⁸ Volunteers receive a Sunday Streets t-shirt and lunch voucher.

4 There is no permanent or part-time position specifically charged with Open Streets coordination.
5 Open Streets is currently organized and supported by the St. Louis Mayor's Office, led by a Special
6 Assistant to the Mayor. The Special Assistant works closely with the city's Special Events Program
7 Executive and a private sector event coordinator for each event. In addition, a Policy Specialist with
8 Trailnet attends Open Streets organizing meetings and assists with route selection to include bike
9 lanes and greenways. Neighborhood leaders attend the meetings specific to the events transiting
10 their communities.

11 Volunteers for Open Streets in 2010 were coordinated by the St. Louis Bike Federation (now part of
12 Trailnet). The coordination was an uncompensated position with several dozen volunteers at the
13 events.¹⁴ In 2011 and 2012, the city recruited 15 volunteers per event through contacts and local
14 universities to canvass the neighborhoods before Open Streets and assist with set-up and take-
15 down of activity hubs and traffic barriers, though they did not participate in controlling street
16 closures or day-of information.

17 Programming

18 Both Sunday Streets and Open Streets include a variety of programmed and informal activities.
19 From 2008-2010, each San Francisco community engaged local partners and advocates to develop
20 the program of activities (e.g. bike education) and offer scheduled and drop-in classes (e.g. yoga,
21 dance, tai chi chuan, hula-hooping) at specific Sunday Street events. The Committee also
22 coordinated activities by category (80+ groups), ensured permits and resources, managed
23 insurance certificates and other documentation, provided information on activity locations, created

1 schedule and information for activity guides and provided amplification (including permits) for live
2 music activities.

3 Some events were coordinated with other citywide activities. For example, the first event of 2009,
4 along the Embarcadero, was a collaborative effort with the Fisherman’s Wharf Health & Safety Fair.
5 The second event that year coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Bay Trail and the route
6 included most of San Francisco’s Bay trail, while the 3rd event was a partnership with the SF
7 Symphony during their annual Dolores Park Free concert, a park along the route.

8 Activities offered during Open Streets have varied greatly. The city has engaged neighborhood
9 groups, citywide programs and merchant associations who have a history of supporting public
10 events and are related to the healthy living message. The event coordinator (2011-2012) also
11 invited specific organizations and performers. The majority of activity hubs were unfunded, with
12 the exception of one musical act per event. A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Active Living
13 Research (RWJF-ALR) grant supported youth-focused activity hubs during 2011 and 2012 with
14 mini-grants of \$200-600 each. The grants supported the purchase of materials and supplies that
15 were used by the organization during and after the event (e.g. portable basketball goal). Activity
16 hubs included skating demonstrations and lessons, yoga, ZUMBA[®], soccer skills, guided bike rides,
17 active living crafts, table tennis, and basketball. DJs, live musicians, and hula-hoop gymnasts also
18 provided active entertainment and food trucks and farmer’s markets have been available. Beyond
19 activity hubs directly associated with Open Streets, six of the seven events have been linked with
20 other city events including a Bike-to-Busch baseball game and Halloween festivities.

21 Community Engagement and Outreach

1 Sunday Streets SF and Open Streets are characterized by some notable differences in the extent of
2 community engagement. Community leadership and involvement have been key to the planning
3 and implementation of Sunday Streets since 2008. Since events are intentionally routed through
4 underserved neighborhoods, targeted populations are represented through key stakeholders and
5 community organizations in the development of the event and are given priority in placement and
6 scheduling of activities and performances. Community organizations are also given the opportunity
7 to plan and implement “companion events” such as the Bayview Music and Arts Festival held in
8 conjunction with the Bayview/Dogpatch event. Community organizers are consulted on dates of
9 events and specific route details. Face to face meetings during the planning phase are another
10 example of community engagement and feedback. City departments such as Mayor’s Office of
11 Neighborhood Services and Office of Community Engagement participate in outreach to non-
12 English speaking populations.

13 Monthly meetings with entities such as Police Community Relations, neighborhood associations
14 and merchant associations engaged those along the route. Of special concern were efforts to inform
15 residents of potential car towing through fliers and neighborhood canvassing. Support was
16 provided by the Mayor’s Office on Neighborhood Services in providing outreach and contact with
17 neighborhood stakeholders.²² Focused marketing was conducted to inform residents about the
18 goals and activities of the event through local and ethnic media.

19 Open Streets is an example of a top-down approach, although local stakeholders
20 participated in routing and assisted with activity hubs. Community feedback took the form of city-
21 run Facebook and Twitter forums, and a direct survey in which participants were asked to provide
22 a “wish-list” for activities and structure of Open Streets. The local alderperson has also been
23 engaged early in the process with each route. This higher order engagement has not always
24 translated into complete neighborhood engagement as the majority of participants in some routes

1 resided outside of the surrounding neighborhood.²⁶ Also, each event has had a few residents who
2 were unaware of street closures and the event. Yet, there has been notable community support for
3 these events.

4 Merchant Buy-in

5 Both initiatives experienced mixed feedback from merchants along the route. While there were
6 initial fears of slower businesses in both cities, there have also been many examples of requests for
7 the program by merchant associations. For the inaugural Sunday Streets event of 2008, Fisherman’s
8 Wharf Community Benefits District Merchants expressed concern about the absence of parking and
9 car access and a consulting group was hired to conduct interviews.²³ The results indicated that
10 68.4% of the participants attended the Fisherman’s Wharf Health & Safety Fair specifically to
11 participate in Sunday Streets; 30.9% of attendees arrived at the event by private vehicles but 50%
12 came by bike or walked. More than 65% purchased a meal while attending the Fair and attendees
13 spent an average of \$38 (less than other Wharf visitors). However, the following year, the
14 Fisherman’s Wharf merchants, as well as those in at least two other districts, began requesting that
15 a Sunday Streets event be developed for their neighborhoods.²⁴

16 Sunday Streets SF has institutionalized its approach to sponsorship offering two levels of
17 investment and benefits: Community Sponsor (\$5,000 per event) that includes logo or name
18 recognition on all media event materials (e.g. banners, fliers, etc.); and Route Sponsor (\$15,000 per
19 event) offering route exclusivity, media recognition and event media.²⁵

20 Community and merchant support for Open Streets has been “mixed at best”.¹⁶ Open Streets are on
21 Saturday and not Sunday as requested by church communities along initial routes. In general,
22 boutique stores and restaurants were supported by shoppers, but national chains and those
23 merchants with larger, street-facing parking lots reported lost business due to the closing of

1 streets.¹⁵ Across the four surveyed events (each a different route), 61.9–82.3% of respondents
2 reported spending money at the event and 34.1–73.9% became aware of a new business.²⁶

3 To engage local merchants, each business along the route was personally visited by organizers and
4 provided with Open Streets advertising materials. The merchants were encouraged to engage Open
5 Street participants with signage and activities on the sidewalk or street. Open Streets has not
6 institutionalized sponsorship, but does provide logo or name recognition on printed materials for
7 all financial and in-kind donations.

8 Media

9 Both initiatives use a variety of media to inform the public including fliers and posters, print
10 advertising in local newspapers and television spots. In San Francisco, press conferences are
11 typically held prior to an event often with the local District Supervisor and information is
12 distributed through the Mayor’s Press Office and MTA Marketing. In-kind media support is
13 provided by the *SF Examiner* and Clear Channel Radio.¹⁷ SFMTA supports marketing Sunday Streets
14 through transit media: electronic signage, ads on its homepage and printed materials on transit
15 vehicles.¹¹ As of September 10, 2012, 9,148 fans “like” Sunday Streets on Facebook and there are
16 more than 3,665 followers on Twitter.

17 In St. Louis, yard signs are placed along the route and at nearby intersections the week of the event.

18 In addition, Open Streets has tried to engage social media and the Internet with an Open Streets
19 website, Facebook page (822 Likes as of 8/23/2012), Twitter account (375 followers), and
20 reaching out to St. Louis-specific blogs. Cycling and running-specific Listservs are also emailed.

21 Funding

22 Sunday Streets SF and Open Streets support their initiatives through grant writing, donations, and
23 in-kind support. Shape Up SF and Kaiser Permanente were among the early agencies providing

1 substantial support to Sunday Streets. Since implementation, the balance between public and
2 private funding sources has shifted and in 2010, the San Francisco's Mayor's Office directed all city
3 agencies to absorb their respective costs associated with each event and appointed the SFMTA as
4 the lead agency for Sunday Streets, instead of the Department of Public Health.¹¹ Funding to
5 support the full-time program director and part-time program assistant and external costs (e.g.
6 equipment rental, printing, graphic design, other administrative costs) is raised through corporate
7 and nonprofit sponsorships, individual donations and grants from private and non-profit
8 organizations, and local and regional government. Sunday Streets SF was purposefully established
9 as an independent nonprofit in order to facilitate the fiscal management of the program and to seek
10 grant funding.¹¹

11 Prior to the 2010 event, the St. Louis Mayor's Office raised approximately \$80,000 to support Open
12 Streets. Funding sources included Boeing, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, HealthLink, and Great
13 Rivers Greenway. Additional, smaller funding and in-kind donations have enhanced this initial
14 funding. The RWJF-ALR grant provided some marketing funding for the 2012 events. There are
15 currently no sustainable fundraising initiatives for St. Louis Open Street.

16 Conclusions

17 Through systematic investigation and analyses, we have described the process of initiation,
18 development, implementation and challenges to sustainability of two ciclovía initiatives (with over
19 40 total events). This analysis of processes used to develop Sunday Streets and Open Streets and
20 the structures and practices used for implementation offers lessons learned and reflections on
21 similarities and differences between two models of ciclovía initiatives:

- 22 1. Structure collaborations. Formalize agreements with city agencies, including safety
23 personnel, to minimize confusion, secure support and to maintain responsibility and
24 accountability.

- 1 2. Community, merchant and government buy-in increases likelihood of sustainable
2 initiatives. Buy-in and community awareness is raised by participating in community
3 meetings rather than by creating separate ones. This also involves incorporating local
4 stakeholders, community advocates and organizers into the process.
- 5 3. Volunteers are an essential component of a successful initiative. Develop a bank of available
6 volunteers—particularly those invested in specific events and neighborhoods—who are
7 committed to the sustainability of the initiative.
- 8 4. Operationalize an efficient programming process. Streamline application, select food
9 vendors to comply with goals of program, market scheduled events, and encourage local
10 communities to offer programs.
- 11 5. Route selection is key. Finalize and announce routes and schedule as early as possible to
12 build community and organizational support and find funders, partners and other sponsors.
13 Routes with key destinations (parks, fairs, other events) and along major or recognizable
14 streets provide greater incentives to participate. Also, route selection vetting should include
15 identification of other events in community and across city, major holidays, location of
16 places of worship, private functions held near location, and public safety issues.
- 17 6. Longer routes and hours increase the reach of health benefiting physical activity, and
18 include the potential to engage more people.⁴
- 19 7. Promotion of event is necessary for success. Market through a variety of media and include
20 a line item in the budget for paid media. Day of wayfinding (connected bus routes, metro
21 stops, and where to park) and signage and maps posted throughout the route indicating
22 route, activities and facilities are critically important.

23

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