



American Planning Association
Making Great Communities Happen

WHAT IS... **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?**

The American Planning Association is an organization of planners and those interested in planning.

APA defines the purposes of planning as:

1. Helping to create communities of lasting value
2. Offering better choices for where and how people work and live
3. Engaging citizens, businesses, and civic leaders to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, help planners, officials, and citizens by providing research, educational resources, practical advice and tools, and up-to-date information on planning.

How do people getting around? How fast are people getting to work? Are people reaching their destinations safely? How does food get to the grocery store? These are the questions a transportation planner asks every day.

While a transportation planner works with many types of transportation, he or she usually specializes in a certain kind, called a mode, of transportation. From cars and trains to bikes and planes, a transportation planner ensures people get around safely, move efficiently, and have choices for how to travel. Transportation planners even plan for the pedestrians using sidewalks and crosswalks. Many people use multiple modes in a single day, transferring from a bus to walking or from a car to a train. With so many different modes of travel out there, a transportation planner's job is a careful balancing act.

Planning for public transportation must take into account the number of people using buses, subways, and trains and at the same time manage the limited resources of transit agencies. Planners must also consider how various modes of transportation affect such things as the air we breathe, crowding on streets, and the safety of everyone using streets and highways. Since planners cannot ask each rider where exactly they want to go, they must estimate where people are, where they want to go, and at what times. Today this is done both with research and by asking people to voluntarily report their movements through apps. Many Americans use cars to get where they want to go and cars need lots of space to move around. The food we eat, the gas that powers our cars, and the clothes we wear are all delivered to the store or station by trucks. Transportation planners must plan for cars and trucks even when they are not moving! Just think about how many parking spaces or delivery zones along the street there are in your community.

Transportation planners plan for people to get around by foot, bike, or even unicycles! Planners must provide sidewalks wide enough for pedestrians and street cafes, and bike lanes located safely between the street and sidewalks. Even little things like the height of curbs, which can be important for a person using a cane, are important for transportation planners. Today, there are transportation planners who specialize in each mode and who make your daily trip easier.