

## TSET Better Health Podcast Transcript

### Episode 38: Fun, Fit and Safe Physical Activity for All Ages

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Summary: May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, but you don't have to be a top athlete to join the fun. Physical activity is great for Oklahomans of all ages and abilities! Episode 38 of the TSET Better Health Podcast explores how, from Bike, Roll and Walk to School Day for students in early May through free workout videos from Shape Your Future that help beginners bust their yoga, dance and barre exercise moves. Listeners also will hear from an Oklahoma Department of Transportation official on the makings of an active transportation plan that will help cities and towns of all sizes improve access and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and others.

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#### **[Theme music]**

James Tyree: Hello and welcome to Episode 38 the TSET Better Health Podcast. This is your host James Tyree, senior health communication consultant at TSET.

Dylan Jasna: And I am Dylan Jasna, a TSET Health Communication manager. The pleasant temperatures of spring, right between the cold of winter and heat of summer, making this a great time of year to go outside and be physically active. This makes May a perfect time for National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Sports are great – I know you love them, James. But anyone of any age and ability can enjoy and benefit from their favorite forms of physical activity.

J. Tyree: You are right about me and sports – go Sooners! – and I agree that we all can enjoy physical activity, even when it's as simple as taking a pleasant walk or bike ride.

D. Jasna: TSET, through its Shape Your Future website and messaging campaigns, encourages Oklahomans and their families to be physically active, and offers a variety of tips and resources in that area. One example is a new series of beginner workout videos on ShapeYourFutureOK.com, and we will hear more about that later in this episode.

Meanwhile, TSET's community-based grantees work with local partners to create local environments that increase both access and safety for walking, biking and other forms of physical activity throughout cities and towns.

J. Tyree: This can include special events like National Bike, Walk and Roll to School Day, which takes place each year in May. We will learn how and why kids and adults in Webbers Falls will participate in the fun and healthy event. But first we will hear about the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's current statewide effort to help cities and

towns of all sizes boost safety for all modes of getting around, including walking and biking. Let's meet the point person for this plan:

S. Templin: (00:13) I am Shelby Templin. I am the active transportation coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. I've been in this role for just over four years now. I have a background in regional and city planning.

J. Tyree: What, exactly, is an active transportation coordinator?

S. Templin: (0:55) Just to lay a little bit of groundwork, there is a federal requirement from USDOT in Washington DC that every state DOT must have, and there's been a transition time period of titles, but it's either termed a bicycle and pedestrian coordinator or active transportation coordinator, which is what we hear in Oklahoma use as our title, so I fulfill that requirement. And really this position is geared towards all things that are not first-person driver. So normally you think of active transportation being either sidewalks, people walking, or bicycles, but this could also include things like the motorized scooters that we see, something that's known in the industry as the first mile and last mile problem, which is getting from, say, you're taking a bus, and you get off at the bus stop, how do you get to your final destination, that's also that active transportation piece.

J. Tyree: Is there a connection between active transportation and health and wellness?

S. Templin: (3:12) I honestly think the two go hand in hand. Recently we've been working really close with the Oklahoma State Department of Health. We've entered into a memorandum of understanding with the health department as well as TSET as our side agency, because we've realized there really is that connection and the crossroads of active transportation and health. If you think about, say, European countries, they aren't having to exercise regularly or really think about it because it's just ingrained in their society that they walk everywhere or they bike everywhere. And as a by-product of that, they have lower obesity rates and better health outcomes and things like that. So I think that if we could make active transportation more accessible and more common, that in hand goes with those health outcomes.

J. Tyree: Does active transportation only pertain to larger cities and suburbs?

S. Templin: (4:10) So I think that the general assumption, whenever somebody hears about bicycle and pedestrian planning or active transportation, your thoughts immediately go to, like you said, sidewalks, bike lanes, bike paths, things like that. And one thing that we've actually had a lot of dealings with here at the Department of Transportation is the fact that we do have so many rural communities. And at the end of the day, not everybody can or wants to drive a vehicle. ~~there's people with DUIs, there's people with vision impairments, things like that.~~ So we really do have to accommodate all of those opportunities. And when you're speaking in a rural sense, active transportation absolutely has a place, you just have to tailor it to the community and the size. So an active transportation improvement may be something as simple as lowering a speed limit from 35 miles an hour to 25 miles an hour, or just adding a mid-block crosswalk just so that people feel a little bit more comfortable crossing the street.

(5:35) So with the Department of Transportation, we encounter, I would say, a solid 60% to 75% of these rural small towns. Their main street is actually a state highway, so we have a lot of involvement in those locations. So actually, back in 2018, we published a planning and policy document called the Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian Plan. We actually were able to bring in some experts from the Federal Highway Administration to assist us in writing this plan, and we specialized and really focused in on those rural and small-town opportunities because, like I said, not everybody can or wants to drive. So we really need to make sure that the opportunities are there for everyone and not just in those large urban centers.

J. Tyree: I understand ODOT is seeking a lot of public input for the state's new comprehensive active transportation plan?

S. Templin: (8:26) In January, it was a whirlwind week, we did 10 online public meetings in four days, and we had what I would consider a great turnout as far as public meetings go. I think we talked to over 75 people across the state. We hosted those meetings a little more regionally just so that we could get a feel for what different concerns may be in different areas and things like that. And then we invited anyone and everyone, it was a totally open public meeting. We had everyone from just basic level citizens to city managers, we even had our ODOT division engineers out in the field participate just so that we could really get that buy-in from everyone in the area. And so we got wonderful feedback from that. And then we also hosted an online survey for, I think, it was open for right at two months, and we got over a thousand responses on that survey as well. And once again, really, really good response rate and really good feedback.

(9:40) So right now we have gone through our public information and we realized that there were some considerable gaps in the responses that we received as far as socioeconomic information, age group, race and ethnicity, things like that. So we're going back to cover all of our bases, and we are hosting a few focus groups to really hone in on those groups that we feel like maybe didn't have a chance to be represented in that first round. So just yesterday, we had a focus group with school representatives. We had a lot of safety officers, transportation coordinators and things like that for various school districts across the state.

J. Tyree: So ultimately, what will the plan look like, and how do you think it will help Oklahomans throughout the state?

S. Templin: (00:45, second recording) Our goal with this plan is really to emphasize that policy guidance and really be a list of best practices. We're hopeful that this will become a toolkit for the Department of Transportation as well as local communities that may not have the funding or the resources to create a document like this for their own use. A lot of smaller communities, I mean, they've got a city manager who is also the public works director, who is also the planning director. So they don't have the staff or the capability to develop something like this. So we hope that this will be something we can really just hand over to them as well as utilize in our own design of projects upcoming.

(1:37) Like I said, It'll be a toolkit that'll say something along the lines of, if you have a roadway with X amount of cars daily, probably want to implement this improvement, say a crosswalk, or a separated bike lane, or things like that. So that's where we're at on the policy development. So really just starting to get off the ground with what we feel like will work best in Oklahoma and for Oklahoma roads.

J. Tyree: What happens next?

S. Templin: (2:26) So we are looking at wrapping up the plan development in likely June or July because this is a plan that we are using federal dollars to pay for. It is required to go out for a 30-day public comment period. Anybody across the state can provide any feedback that they feel strongly about. We will have that posted on our websites, which is okatp.org. Once that goes live for public comment, as well as I'm sure news stations will pick it up, the newspapers, things like that, we'll do a public listing that we are asking for those public comments. And we will, like I said, accept those for 30 days. At that point, we will come back and see if there are any major changes to be made based on the comments that we receive.

(3:17) And then the ultimate final stamp of approval will be we will take it to our ODOT commission, which we have nine commissioners that will review the documents and officially approve it. That will likely be in August or September. And as soon as it is approved and accepted by commission, it will be live and ready to be utilized.

J. Tyree: Going back to the public feedback that ODOT received recently through meetings and surveys, is there anything of note that you learned?

S. Templin: (3:57) So one thing that was overarching, and this is completely intuitive if you've lived in Oklahoma for any amount of time, a large percentage of people do not live close to their workplace. Through all of these public meetings and public outreach and talks and things like that, I've kind of used myself as an example. I live about 35 miles from my workplace, so it's likely never going to be feasible that I'm going to bike to work. So that has been a lot of the feedback is the primary places that people are wanting to go are what is close to their home. So that could be retail, that could be groceries, that could be their child's school, things like that.

(5:01) Getting to work really is not of high priority for many Oklahomans, at least not in our survey research. So we really are focusing on that one to two mile really close range to where people are living. Which is interesting because we really thought that there was going to be a lot of feedback from the more dense urban centers of Downtown Oklahoma City, Downtown Tulsa. But it really was that more suburban emphasis of, "I live in this neighborhood, but I want to get to the 7-Eleven that's half a mile from my house. How do I do that?" So that was really, like I said, it wasn't surprising, but I think that that was the overarching response that we heard from people.

J. Tyree: Anything else of interest?

S. Templin: (a little after 6:00) ... A major concern is, like I said before, is so many of these small towns have a state highway running right through them. And we had a lot of Native

American response saying, "I work at this casino, but I live on the north side of the highway, and I cannot safely walk to work." We heard in one of our focus groups that there were several instances where people would have to call out from work because they couldn't safely get there and things like that. So that's another key point that we've been looking at.

J. Tyree: Where can people go to learn more about the active transportation plan, or about pedestrian or bicycle safety in general?

S. Templin: (7:17) I would say the best source of information right now, as far as the plan goes and all things active transportation, is going to be from our website, which once again is okatp.org. That has all information about our timeline, what the purpose of the project is, things like that. I also do have a direct email that I have access to, which is bikeped@odot.org. I'm more than happy to speak with anybody. All things bike ped. This is kind of my world. I'm the only person at the Department of Transportation that does active transportation. So I will take anything I can get. I love hearing comments from the public because I feel like we can't grow if we don't know what people want or need.

(music)

J. Tyree: It was great hearing and learning about what is happening with active transportation at the statewide level, and we appreciate Shelby Templin's time with us. But now let's hone in on one school that is planning a big event for its students and community.

D. Jasna: That community is Webbers Falls, in Muskogee County in eastern Oklahoma. A school there will participate in Bike & Roll to School Day, which is scheduled nationally on May 3, but will take place a little later – and with a bunch of walkers – in Webbers Falls. Let's meet the event's point person.

M. Johnson: (0:08) My name is Meghan Johnson, and officially I am the middle school and high school math teacher for Webbers Falls. But I also work as a cross-country coach and I'm the afterschool coordinator, Neighbors Building Neighborhoods liaison, and then also lead an FCA group.

(0:46) So we're going to do our Walk, Bike and Roll to School on Tuesday, May 9th. And we are going to include pre-K up through the middle school, up through eighth grade. And then we recruit our high school students to help with that, to kind of help direct traffic or help get kids where they need to be. I have some high school students that will be taking pictures for the yearbook and for our school publicity pieces. But as far as the walk, biking or rolling, that actual physical movement to school, that's going to be pre-K through eighth grade.

D. Jasna: How much adult involvement is also expected?

M. Johnson: (1:40) Most of the teachers are going to be here at the school getting ready to start their day. There's a few teachers that will also bike and roll the school. The kindergarten

teacher usually brings her bike. And we do have some parents that will roll around along to school. This is, takes so much just to ensure safety for everybody that our local PD, everybody will be on shift from there. We involve the city workers from Webbers to kind of help block streets off to ensure student safety. Of course, TSET is going to be there. And Tiffany will be there helping direct that Healthy Living Grant.

D. Jasna: That would be Tiffany Tolbert of the TSET Healthy Living Program serving Muskogee County. But Meghan wasn't done naming adult volunteers.

M. Johnson: We have OSU Extension's going to be there. Folks from Cherokee Nation are going to be there. And then some people from Youth Volunteer Corps. So we're just going to include everybody that, anybody and everybody that wants to come help this run smoothly. And hand out stickers to the kids that say, "Yay, I walked to school." And direct traffic. And yeah, there's a lot of people helping out with this.

D. Jasna: So what will happen on the morning of the event?

M. Johnson: (3:03) So what we do, and every school that does this is a little bit different. And that's one thing that TSET and Tiffany have been great with, is sort of catering it so this is unique to our school. But we are going to meet down in the lower park. Most of our students don't live within walking distance of the school, so we want to encourage them to participate. So at 07:15 in the morning, between 07:15 and 07:30, parents can drop off students at the Webbers Falls City Park down there. Or kids that are walking and biking, they live close enough, will arrive at the school.

(3:41) And we'll start collecting ourselves into a parade, if you will, where we will have our bikers first, at the front of the line, followed by our rollers if anybody's on roller blades or scooters. And then the walkers at the ends. And then at 07:35, we'll all begin walking this big parade. Our mayor in his golf cart will lead the parade. He decks it out with American flags and decorates his golf cart. And so he will lead the parade as we go along this pre-designated route to school that will be flanked by the sheriff's department and the local PD and the city workers and the State Highway Patrol. Anybody that can come in and help really protect that route to school and make sure it really is safe.

(4:41) And then we'll do this to the school at 07:35, we'll start our parade. The kids will get to this school and there will be volunteers at the school. And each kid will get a sticker that says, "Yay, I Walk, Bike, and Roll to School. And then they will go in and have their breakfast and proceed about their normal school day. It is probably about six or seven blocks.

D. Jasna: It sounds like the day will be pretty fun and festive for a lot of kids and adults, all while being physically active. I understand you also participated in Walk or Bike to School Day last fall?

M. Johnson: (5:27) Yeah, so we did this on October 5th in the fall was the first time we did it. And we just had amazing participation in it, far more participation than we expected. It was just a super great turnout. So we did that on October 5th and it went so well and the kids

were so excited, "When are we going to do it again? When are we going to do it again?" So I was like, "Okay, we don't want to do it in the winter, so we'll try again in the spring." And so just looking at schedules, we thought, yes, May 9th is a great time for us to do it again and just to really bring that continued excitement of physical activity to the students and excitement of just coming to school in a different way. So this will be our second time doing it.

D. Jasna: While May 9<sup>th</sup> will be a great day, how do you hope the students and community will benefit health and safety-wise beyond the event?

M. Johnson: (6:42) Well, like I said, I am the cross-country coach. And personally I find a lot of benefit to just physical movement and being outside in the sunshine. And I just want to encourage kids to be outside with their friends. And if parents come along, be outside with their families. So my hope is to promote that, just that physical activity. We did have prior to our October Walk, Bike and Roll to School, we did have a assembly, a safety assembly. And so one of the things that the kids took away from that was just the importance of helmets and looking both ways and following the traffic rules and that whole safety piece that comes with it. And so this will give them another chance to practice that.

(7:35) And I also think that for our community, it's great to have this big event because then that encourages our community members that are out driving around that they do need to be aware that yes, May 9th is a big event. October 5th was a big event, but pay attention because we are encouraging our students to be outside walking and biking. And so I think it helps promote safety from both ends, both from the walkers and the bikers, and then from the community at large.

D. Jasna: Do you have any advice for staff at other schools or youth organizations who may want to organize an event like this in their community?

M. Johnson: (8:33) So I think my biggest piece of advice is it takes a lot of different brains to pull this together and people that are coming at it from a lot of different directions. So the fact that we were working with TSET and we were working with the Cherokee Nation and OSU Extension and the health department and the police departments and the sheriff's departments, as all these people had different suggestions and came at it from different directions. And what about this and what about this? Have you thought about this? So I think having a lot of, it's not a situation where too many cooks are going to spoil the soup. It's, we need a lot of brains coming from a lot of different directions looking at this. And I think that is super important. And I think that just publicizing it and really getting people excited about participating in it.

(music)

D. Jasna: Webbers Falls is one of many schools in Oklahoma and throughout the nation that will participate in a Bike & Roll to School Day in May. To learn more, visit [walkbiketoschool.org](http://walkbiketoschool.org).



- J. Tyree: Another great website to visit is [shapeyourfutureok.com](http://shapeyourfutureok.com), TSET's website that helps Oklahomans eat better, move more and live tobacco free in many easy and practical ways. My friend and co-host Dylan does a lot to manage that site.
- D. Jasna: I do and I really enjoy it. One new feature is a video series called "Shake Up Your Workout Routine," and we recently got to speak with one of the instructors in the series.
- J. Spivey: (0:13) My name is Jasmine Spivey. I work in marketing management and I also teach barre. An exercise class outside of work, that is my part-time job at Barre3 in Edmond. And so yeah, those are my two jobs. That's what I enjoy doing.
- D. Jasna: Tell us a little more about the videos.
- J. Spivey: (0:54) Yeah, so we, meaning Shape Your Future, have a host of beginner-friendly workouts that anyone can do. They're super easy. It's a great start to starting your physical exercise journey. A lot of them can be done in your own home, so you don't have to have a gym membership. They include things like yoga, something we call barre, and dance fitness. So if you are into like salsa and Zumba and dancing, that is the place for you.
- D. Jasna: What is barre exercise?
- J. Spivey: (1:29) So barre is a type of workout that incorporates ballerina bars. And so whenever you see a ballerina studio, you'll see a bar that runs along the side of the room. It's about hip level. That is where the term barre originates from. So it has Pilates and yoga elements as well as those dancer ballet bar exercises.
- D. Jasna: Yoga? Zumba? Barre? That can sound pretty tough for someone who's just starting out.
- J. Spivey: (2:16) Yes, absolutely. So we intentionally design the video to be things that most anybody can do at any level. And you can always make things easier, add some more modifications, and maybe make things a little harder as well.
- D. Jasna: There are a lot of places and resources where people can get workout and exercise instruction, so what makes these Shape Your Future videos unique?
- J. Spivey: (2:30) To me, the biggest driver for these videos to be the most accessible is that they're free. So they do not cost any money, there's no subscription, there's no hidden fees, there's no limits. And so that is great for accessibility for any Oklahoman, anyone, anywhere. Additionally, you can do these workouts from your home, so you don't need a gym membership. You can successfully get a great workout in about 10 minutes or less in the comfort of your own home, maybe your kitchen, maybe your living room. Or even a garage.
- D. Jasna: Jasmine, why do you, personally, enjoy physical activity and working out?
- J. Spivey: (3:41) Yeah, that's a great question. I think in general, I always feel better after I work out, after I get a good sweat going on. It doesn't even have to be two hours long. It could just be 30 to 60 minutes of moving. Whether it's a walk, whether it's working out



lifting weights. Maybe it's a barre class. I just always feel better after doing it. So that's my main motivation, to keep going. So great mental health benefits, great physical health. And honestly, it's just the best way I take care of myself is to be active.

D. Jasna: Do you have other recommendations or words of advice for staying physically active?

J. Spivey: (5:21) For sure. So my number one suggestion would be to go to [shapeyourfutureok.com](http://shapeyourfutureok.com) and at the top of the toolbar, you're going to want to click on Get Active. When you click on Get Active, there's a lot of places you can start. So if you're low on time, there's a save time tab. If you're working out with your kids, we have a kid friendly option. And then if you want to work out somewhere besides a gym, we also have lots of resources on workouts and activities you can do that can be done pretty much anywhere. Even at your office desk if you're at work.

(6:21) My number one advice would be to make it fun. I think that maybe there's negative connotations around exercising and getting fit and working out, when really it should be the most positive experience. Doing workouts that you enjoy will provide the most long-term benefit. It will make you feel better, grabbing your friends. Doing it with your friends, your family, your kiddos. Or maybe all of the above. So do what they think is fun. Maybe somebody that really enjoys their workout, maybe you join them. And that's your starting point. But yeah, I would say my number one advice is to always do what you enjoy. If you don't enjoy cardio, maybe try strength. If you don't enjoy strength, maybe try walking. There's something for everyone and there's always a great place to start.

(music)

J. Tyree: You know, Dylan, that is excellent advice. How do you plan to be active this spring and summer? I plan to take lots of walks, do a bit of hiking and maybe play a little basketball and tennis.

D. Jasna: (Your answer)

J. Tyree: That sounds good. Once again, we want to thank our guests Shelby Templin of ODOT, Meghan Johnson of Webbers Falls Schools and Jasmine Spivey of Shape Your Future for their time and helpful insights. We hope you enjoyed the discussions and feel inspired to be physically active this spring and year-round.

D. Jasna: And as a reminder, you can listen to this or any past episode of the TSET Better Health Podcast at [tset.ok.gov/podcast](http://tset.ok.gov/podcast), or anywhere you normally listen to podcasts. So until next time, this is Dylan Jasna ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree, wishing you peace ...

D. Jasna: And better health.