

Strategies to Create Safe Streets and Outdoor Spaces During COVID-19 and Beyond

Health professionals have made it clear that practicing physical distancing is necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, maintaining the recommended six feet distance on narrow sidewalks and public parks, especially in dense urban areas has been difficult. How we get around safely whether it is for essential trips, exercise, or fresh air is more important than ever.

With [car traffic dropping dramatically](#) our streets and public spaces are being reimagined to create space for social distancing. Cities across the nation are adapting to the new situation by implementing a range of strategies to make our streets safer, relieve crowded spaces and keep pedestrians and bikers safe.

Creating Safe Outdoor Spaces for Essential Travel and Recreation

- [Brookline has closed on-street parking lanes or reduced motor vehicle travel lanes](#) on four major thoroughfares to give people more space to physically distance while walking and biking to essential services and essential work.
- To reduce crowding in parks and trails and to help people recreate safely, the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has [closed sections of four area parkways to vehicular traffic](#). Sections of Day Boulevard in South Boston, Parkman Drive in Jamaica Plain, and Greenough Boulevard in Watertown will be closed to vehicles indefinitely, and sections of Fellsway West in Medford will be closed to car traffic on the weekends. DCR has also converted trails into one-way loops at [Lake Park, in Quinsigamond State Park in Worcester](#), and in the [Walden Pond State Reservation in Concord](#).
- [All sidewalks in Beverly are currently one-way tracks](#), with pedestrians walking on the left side of the street, against the flow of traffic.
- [Burlington, VT](#); [Oakland, CA](#); [Minneapolis, MN](#); [Denver, CO](#); and [Philadelphia](#) have all limited car access to various streets so that residents can more safely bike, walk and jog.
- In order to reduce contact points, many cities are programming their pedestrian 'beg buttons' to turn on walk signals automatically. These cities include [Arlington, Brookline, Cambridge, and Boston, MA](#); [Providence, RI](#); and [Los Angeles, CA](#).
- Several urban bike sharing programs are offering free 30-day memberships to various categories of essential workers. Look for the [Bluebikes](#) program Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, Everett, & Somerville, MA; the [Citi Bikes](#) program in New York City; [Divvy](#) in Chicago (which is also offering \$1/day rides and 1/2-price annual memberships to everyone); and [Capital Bikeshare](#) in Washington D.C.

- An up-to-date list of actions and policies implemented nationally is being maintained by the [National Association of City Transportation Officials \(NACTO\)](#) and [Smart Growth America](#). NACTO has also put together additional [strategies, tools, and resources](#) for cities and transportation agencies to help them respond effectively during the current crisis.

Guidelines on Using Parks and Open Spaces

- In addition to the [MA Department of Public Health's general COVID-19 guidelines](#), the Baker-Polito Administration has announced [measures to reduce crowding at state parks](#). These include visiting parks that are close to your home, and only participating in activities like walking, jogging or biking while there.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed safety and health [guidelines specifically for park and recreational use](#).
- The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) [provides several recommendations](#), including alerting others before you pass them on a trail or sidewalk, so that they can give you adequate space.
- This statement by the [MA Vision Zero Coalition](#) offers recommendations for city officials to make it safer for people to take essential trips.

Measures Taken by Transit Agencies in Response to COVID-19

A third of transit users across the country are essential workers. At this critical time maintaining transit service is necessary to keep essential services running and to allow people to make essential trips. It is also crucial to take steps to keep riders and transit workers safe.

- The MBTA has [implemented measures](#) including rear door boarding, increased cleaning protocols, optimized schedules for healthcare and emergency workers, and is offering transit services for personal care attendants.
- The [CTA in the Chicago area](#), [RTD in the Denver-Boulder area of Colorado](#) and many other agencies are suspending fares and practicing rear-door boarding on buses and trolleys in order to keep passengers physically distant from drivers.
- [Oakland](#) and the [Port Authority in Pittsburg](#) are limiting the number of people on buses to allow for social distancing.
- Guidance from CDC for [bus](#) and [rail](#) transit operators and transit [maintenance workers](#).