

# A Case for Active Transportation



SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

## You Can Help Make Good Health Happen in Your Community

Where you live impacts your health. Your municipality plays an important role in shaping the environment in which you live and in determining the planning and policies that affect your life. Whether it is through parks, zoning bylaws, sidewalk and road planning, the decisions of local government impact the overall health of everyone in your community. Good health starts with each person, but it takes a community to support it.

## Active Transportation = A Healthier Environment = A Healthier You

Think about the decisions that are made in your municipality that affect how physically active you are and how much you are exposed to air pollution. For example, your community can have bike lanes and sidewalks that let you safely walk or bike instead of driving to the bank, retail areas, work or school.

Active transportation is any form of human-powered, non-motorized transportation, such as walking, cycling or wheeling.<sup>1</sup> Active transportation improves health through increasing your physical activity and reducing your exposure to air pollution. You may also find that you have more social interaction when walking and cycling in your neighbourhood, and this also has been shown to improve health.<sup>2</sup> An added benefit is lower transportation costs especially when affordable and accessible public transportation choices are also available.

### Did You Know?

*In Canada, over half of automobile trips are under five kilometres<sup>3</sup> - ideal distances to cover by walking, cycling, in-line skating or other active transportation modes.*

Approximately 46 per cent of Simcoe Muskoka adults are inactive.<sup>4</sup>

Local research suggests that almost half of Grade 1 children in Simcoe County do not meet the national recommendation of 90 minutes of daily physical activity.<sup>5</sup>

Experts agree that moderate physical activity reduces the risk of premature death related to chronic disease and improves psychological and emotional health.<sup>6</sup>

Active transportation can easily fit into your daily schedule when combined with travel time for routine activities.

Reducing the number of daily vehicle trips reduces harmful vehicle emissions.

Active transportation can give us a greater sense of personal and family security through increased presence of "eyes" on the street which is linked to reduced crime.<sup>7</sup>

Congestion of our transportation system can be reduced when sidewalks and paved shoulders are provided that encourage people to walk and cycle.

Rural and urban trails add to the local economy by providing jobs and supporting tourism.

# Municipal Action Can Make a Difference

## Active Transportation Means Healthier Places to Live

When active transportation is a priority in our municipalities, they are healthier places to live. In fact, surveys show that 82 per cent of Canadians support spending government money on more dedicated bicycle lanes and paths in their community.<sup>8</sup>

### Our local municipalities show leadership when they:

- Implement design and maintenance practices for sidewalks, trails and walkways that facilitate safe and efficient pedestrian movement.
- Have dedicated bicycle lanes and routes.
- Include requirements for bicycle parking in zoning by-laws or ordinances.
- Provide publicly accessible bicycle parking racks.
- Install racks on buses and allow bicycles on public transportation.
- Regularly maintain and upgrade pedestrian and cycling facilities.
- Favour community design that reduces the distances that people have to travel to get to work, retail areas, schools and recreation/leisure pursuits.

### Find Out More About Active Transportation

1. Check out the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute website [www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca) for information bulletins about active transportation. There are eight in the series – Health Benefits, Barriers, Economic Benefits, Environmental Benefits, Built Infrastructure, Safety, Increasing Social Capital, and the Role of Decision-Makers.
2. A municipal perspective on opportunities for physical activity: Trends from 2000-2004  
The 2004 Survey of Canadian Municipalities was undertaken to examine aspects related to local policy and the creation of supportive social and physical environments to promote physical activity among residents. Go to [www.cflri.ca/eng/statistics/surveys/documents/2004capacity.pdf](http://www.cflri.ca/eng/statistics/surveys/documents/2004capacity.pdf)
3. How land use and transportation systems impact public health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/aces-workingpaper1.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/aces-workingpaper1.pdf)
4. Promoting sustainable transportation through site design: An ITE Proposed Recommended Practice, Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers. [www.cite7.org/resources/documents/ITERP-PromotingSustainableTransportationThroughSiteDesign.pdf](http://www.cite7.org/resources/documents/ITERP-PromotingSustainableTransportationThroughSiteDesign.pdf)

#### Endnotes

1. What is active transportation? The Public Health Agency of Canada, Physical Activity Unit. [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/active\\_trans.htm](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/active_trans.htm)
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3. Centre for Sustainable Transportation. Sustainable transportation: reflections on the movement of people and of freight, with special attention to the role of the private automobile produced by the in cooperation with Learning for a Sustainable Future. April 1998. Retrieved on October 4, 2006 from [http://cst.uwinnipeg.ca/documents/inquiryonstadobe.pdf#search=SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION](http://cst.uwinnipeg.ca/documents/inquiryonstadobe.pdf#search=SUSTAINABLE%20TRANSPORTATION) Reflections on the movement of people and of freight p. 17.
4. Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 2.1, 2003, Statistics Canada, Share File, Health Planning Branch, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
5. Simcoe County Child Health Survey: preliminary report. June 15, 2004. Simcoe County District Health Unit.
6. Powell and Blair, "The public health burdens of sedentary living habits: theoretical but realistic estimates", Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, 1993, p 26 as cited in Campbell, R., Wittgens, M. (2004, March) The business case for active transportation: The Economic Benefits of Walking and Cycling. p. 25. Retrieved October 4, 2006 from [http://www.goforgreen.ca/at/eng/PDF/at\\_business\\_case.pdf](http://www.goforgreen.ca/at/eng/PDF/at_business_case.pdf)
7. Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Moving without motors: A guide to the active transportation community. Retrieved October 4, 2006 from [http://kn.fcm.ca/file\\_download.php?URL\\_ID=4617&filename=10576050281\\_AT\\_Guide\\_En.pdf&filetype=application%2Fpdf&filesize=536798&name=AT+Guide+En.pdf&location=user-S/](http://kn.fcm.ca/file_download.php?URL_ID=4617&filename=10576050281_AT_Guide_En.pdf&filetype=application%2Fpdf&filesize=536798&name=AT+Guide+En.pdf&location=user-S/)
8. Environics Research Group (1998). Nation-wide research conducted for Go for Green. Available from [http://erg.environics.net/media\\_room/default.asp?alD=361](http://erg.environics.net/media_room/default.asp?alD=361)

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