

A Case for Active Transportation



SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

You Can Help Make Good Health Happen In Your Community

Where you live affects your health. Provincial officials play an important role in shaping the environment in which you live and in deciding the planning and policies that affect your life. Whether it is through long-term provincial land and infrastructure planning needed to support population and economic growth, managing growth so that there is a range of affordable housing types and densities close to employment centres, or through forecasting long-term transportation hubs, the decisions of the provincial government impact the overall health of everyone in your community. Good health starts with each person, but provincial policy and big picture planning are needed to support it.

Active Transportation = A Healthier Environment = A Healthier You

Think about the decisions that are made at the provincial level that affect how physically active you are and how often you are exposed to air pollution. According to the Provincial Policy Statement under Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, healthy, liveable and safe communities are sustained by “avoiding development and land use patterns which may cause environmental or public health and safety concerns”.⁽¹⁾ The way many of our communities have been designed has removed the opportunity to be physically active in our daily lives. Active transportation is an important part of fulfilling provincial policy to ensure that land use, transportation infrastructure and design support the health of the public.

Active transportation is any form of human-powered non-motorized transportation, such as walking, cycling or wheeling.⁽²⁾ Active transportation improves health by increasing physical activity and reducing air pollution. It encourages social contact when walking and cycling, which has been shown to improve health.⁽³⁾ An added benefit is lower transportation costs especially when affordable and nearby public transportation choices are also available.

Did You Know?

In Canada, **more than half** of car trips are ***less than five kilometres***⁽⁴⁾ - ideal distances to cover by walking, cycling, in-line skating or other ways of active transportation.

Approximately 46 per cent of Simcoe Muskoka adults are inactive.⁽⁵⁾

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.⁽⁶⁾

Experts agree that moderate physical activity

reduces the risk of premature death related to chronic disease and improves psychological and emotional health.⁽⁷⁾

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

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

Rural and urban trails add to the local economy by providing jobs, increasing access to stores, businesses and services, and supporting tourism.

PROVINCIAL
ACTION

Provincial Action Can Make a Difference

When active transportation is a priority in our province, we will have 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.⁽⁸⁾

Our provincial officials show leadership when they:

- promote safe, energy efficient movement of people through active transportation;
- champion active transportation infrastructure to reduce the number of vehicle trips;
- support the development of practical choices and plans for public transit and other alternative transportation modes, including commuter rail and bus;
- improve links among transportation systems and modes including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Find out More about Active Transportation

1. Check out the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute website 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 provincial perspective from Nova Scotia. *Nova Scotia Pathways for People Framework for Action* (2006) was prepared by the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection. It provides a guide for directing active transportation initiatives across the province. The development and maintenance of partners at the government, agency and individual levels are key to the growth of active transportation. Go to www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/P4PFramework.pdf
3. How land use and transportation systems impact public health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov
4. Promoting sustainable transportation through site design: An ITE proposed recommended practice, Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers. www.cite7.org

Reference List

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- (3) Campbell R, Wong ML. The business case for active transportation: the economic benefits of walking and cycling. 2004.
- (4) 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 in cooperation with Learning for a Sustainable Future. 1998.
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- (7) Powell K, Blair. The public health burdens of sedentary living habits: theoretical but realistic estimates. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 2007;26.
- (8) Environics Research Group (1998). Nation-wide research conducted for Go for Green. Available from http://eng.environics.net/media_room/default.asp?aID=361