



Building Healthy Communities

Active Transportation

Where you live affects your health. The way our communities are designed can influence our lives in many ways, from the quality of the air we breathe to how physically active we are.

How you live affects the environment. The choices you make every day can have an impact on the environment in a positive or negative way. We share our surroundings with each other and must work together to make changes for the better. Municipalities, health units and others are working to create healthier communities by planning for trails and sidewalks, parks and public spaces, safe roads, reductions in personal vehicle use, access to healthy local food, energy conservation and many other health supporting features. You can help too! Good health starts with each person, but it takes a community to support it.

Active Transportation
=A Healthier Community
=A Healthier You

Active transportation is any form of human-powered, non-motorized transportation such as walking, cycling or wheeling. Active transportation can be part of your everyday routine for getting to work or school, shopping and visiting friends. Using your own energy to get places increases your overall level of physical activity. Active transportation improves individual and community health by providing opportunities for physical activity and being around other people. Traffic is reduced and road safety is increased when there are more people than cars on our streets. It reduces air pollution and other negative environmental impacts. And you'll save money on parking, gas and car repairs by walking and cycling instead.

Think about the decisions you make and the actions you take that affect how you get around in your community.

Did you know?

- ✚ Children are generally not getting enough daily physical activity to support healthy growth and development.
- ✚ Rising rates of childhood obesity and levels of chronic disease in Simcoe Muskoka are cause for concern.
- ✚ Inactive adults are at an increased risk for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes, which are some of the leading causes of premature death in Canada.
- ✚ Sprawling, car-dependent neighbourhoods contribute to poor health.
- ✚ Communities that plan for cars will get more cars. Communities that plan for pedestrians and cyclists will get more people walking and cycling.



You can make a difference when you...

- Build physical activity into your daily routine by walking, cycling or wheeling for reasonable distances. Even five to 10 minutes at a time will benefit your health.
- Assess how walkable your neighbourhood is by using a checklist from www.icanwalk.ca. Identify areas that need improvement and let your municipality know.
- Speak with your neighbours about the issues affecting active transportation in your community and discuss ways to address them.
- Learn more about your municipality's official plan and how it affects active transportation.
 - The official plan guides how land should be used in your community, such as where housing, industry, shops, parks and schools will be located, what services are needed and how road and transportation systems are designed.
 - Official plans are updated at least every five years. A copy of the plan is made available to the public and your local council must ensure a public meeting is held about the plan.
- Contact your municipality at any time to discuss opportunities for input into your community's official plan. Any person can provide written comments and/or speak at the public meeting about the proposed plan.

Municipalities show leadership when they...

- Increase the number of safe cycling and walking routes and improve access to public transit where feasible.
- Maintain and upgrade sidewalks, trails and walkways regularly so they are safe and convenient for pedestrian movement throughout the year.
- Ensure pedestrian amenities are in place such as lighting, benches, shade trees, directional signage, restrooms and water fountains.
- Plan for compact and mixed land use development that reduces distances to employment, shopping, schools and recreational areas.
- Build within community boundaries where infrastructure, roads and services already exist.

For more information:

Refer to other fact sheets in this series: Air Quality, Road Safety, Food Access and Healthy Communities.