

# Making the Case for Active Transportation

## - Bulletin # 2: Barriers -



**Barriers to active transportation** include both physical and social barriers. Physical barriers for those engaging in active transportation include: the inability to cross a road safely due to a large intersection and short crossing signal, lack of walkways over highways or waterways and lack of sidewalks, bike lanes and bike racks. How a community is designed and its zoning and local by-laws can create barriers for those wanting to engage in active transportation.

As walking and biking decline, the tendency of drivers to watch for people engaging in these modes of transportation decline as well.<sup>1</sup> This makes it more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

In 2008, Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth assigned a grade of D for municipal regulations: 96% of surveyed municipalities reported at least one by-law that would be considered prohibitive to physical activity in children and youth.<sup>2</sup>

The type of neighbourhood that people live in can also be a barrier for active living and transportation. The Standing Committee on Health to the House of Commons Canada<sup>3</sup> heard that "people who live in walkable neighbourhoods are 2.4 times more likely to get the recommended amount of physical activity" and "for all age groups, the presence of open space and parks in the neighbourhood, within easy walking distance is the single factor most likely to encourage walking." (p.7)

Negative attitudes about physical activity and active transport are considered social barriers to active transportation. This includes public perception that engaging in walking or cycling may be a sign of lower economic status.<sup>4</sup>

**Active transportation** refers to any form of human-powered transportation. Examples include:

- Walking,
- Cycling,
- Using a wheelchair,
- Pushing a stroller,
- Running, and
- In-line skating or skateboarding.



Photo credit: CFLRI

*Research<sup>5</sup> tells us:*

- ✘ Current policy and planning practices undervalue the importance of active transportation.
- ✘ Cycling and walking have been marginalized in transport decision-making. The primary focus has been to plan on how to move cars faster and more efficiently rather than moving users of non-motorized transportation.
- ✘ High investment in road infrastructure leads to greater levels of car ownership which in turn leads to more traffic problems and pollution.
- ✘ Wider roadway widths at busy intersections make it difficult for pedestrians to cross, especially children, older adults and persons with a disability.
- ✘ High traffic speed combined with a lack of cycling lanes discourages active transportation.

Rural and small communities "are not well served (if at all) by sustainable transportation options such as public transit, cycling and walking paths, or carpooling programs."<sup>6</sup>

### CFLRI Quick Facts

The National Transportation Survey<sup>7</sup> asked Canadians to identify the main thing preventing them from choosing an active mode of transportation more often:

- ✂ Barriers to walking included distance or environment (42%), time or work (20%), the weather or climate (18%), convenience, car or baggage (15%), health or age (12%) and lack of motivation or interest (9%).
- ✂ Barriers to cycling included weather (29%), distance or environment (28%), safety in traffic, storage, or security (17%), time (15%), and practicality (children, lack of shower, etc.) (11%).

### Take Action!

Become aware of barriers in your community. Use a walkability checklist, such as the one available from the Alberta Centre for Active Living,<sup>8</sup> to assess your community. Share your results with municipal decision makers. The first step to making change is *knowing what needs to change!* Take that first step!

Promote the benefits of engaging in active transportation. Share the *Making the Case for Active Transportation-Bulletin #1* with other community members. Learn more together about what is available in your community that supports active transportation. Go out and get active!

Encourage improvement in municipal planning and community development. Visit the website of the government department that oversees the provincial planning legislation (see list in *Making the Case for Active Transportation Bulletin # 5: Built Infrastructure*) to learn more about the municipal planning process and understand how you as a community member can have your voice heard.

Use active transportation yourself and encourage your friends, neighbours, and coworkers. Do your part to create a social norm. Help to start a movement through actively commuting to work, school, recreational activities and to do errands. Actively moving around your own community will help you to identify barriers to bring to the attention of decision makers.



Photo credit: Go for Green

### References:

1. Frank, L., Kavage, S. & Litman, T. (2006). Promoting public health through smart growth: Building healthier communities through transportation and land use policies and practices. *Smart Growth BC*. 1-43.
2. Active Healthy Kids Canada (2008). Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth for 2008. Retrieved from [www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca).
3. Standing Committee on Health (2007). Healthy weights for healthy kids. House of Commons Canada. 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. Retrieved from [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)
4. Butler, G.P., Orpana, H.M. & Wiens, A.J. (2007). By your own two feet: Factors associated with active transportation in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, vol 98 (4) 259- 264.
5. Victoria Transport Policy Institute [www.vtpi.org](http://www.vtpi.org)
6. Transport Canada (2006). Sustainable transportation in small and rural communities. Issue Paper 61. Retrieved from [www.tc.gc.ca/utsp](http://www.tc.gc.ca/utsp)
7. Cragg, S., Cameron C. & Craig, C.L. (2006) 2004 National Transportation Survey. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.
8. [www.centre4activeliving.ca/olderadults/rural/changes/walk\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/olderadults/rural/changes/walk_checklist.pdf)

**How to use this bulletin:** This fact sheet is for the general population and community members. It is for those who would like to increase their knowledge on the barriers to active transportation. Consider using this bulletin as a hand-out at public presentations, community events or health fairs.

### Other *Making the Case for Active Transportation* Bulletins ([www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca)):

- Health Benefits
- Environmental Benefits
- Safety
- Role for Municipal Decision Makers
- Economic Benefits
- Built Infrastructure
- Increasing Social Capital

