



# *ACTIVE Transportation*

**for Municipal Staff & Decision Makers**



Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District  
**HEALTH UNIT**  
Your Partner in Public Health

[www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)



**Active transportation** refers to any form of human-powered transportation used to get from one place to another, such as walking, cycling, using a wheelchair or skateboarding.<sup>1,2</sup>

This information is for both elected municipal council members and municipal staff (e.g., planners, recreation directors, town councillors, CAOs, etc.). Municipal staff and decision makers are the people who plan, promote, and make decisions on behalf of the residents within the community. They have substantial influence on the development patterns, transportation systems, and design of their communities.<sup>3</sup>

## **Benefits of Active Transportation:**

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- Active transportation infrastructure that is safe and connected encourages residents to engage in active transportation more often, improving their overall health. (For more information about the health benefits of active transportation, see the “Active Transportation for You” resource.
- It’s good for business. People who are walking and cycling stop and spend more money at local destinations.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Having a walk friendly and bike friendly community that is designed for all ages and abilities helps to attract and retain residents, businesses and is good for tourism.<sup>6</sup>
- Investing in active transportation results in economic benefits such as higher property values, tourism dollars, and bring jobs and new businesses to your community.<sup>4,7</sup>



## Benefits of Active Transportation:

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- There are cost benefits to investing in active transportation infrastructure such as how paving shoulders extends road life and bicycle parking costs less and creates less demand for vehicle parking. These types of infrastructure require less maintenance costs.<sup>5,7</sup>
- Having active transportation infrastructure for walking and cycling can encourage residents to leave their cars at home, resulting in reduced road congestion and air and noise pollution in your community.<sup>4,5,7</sup>
- Active transportation infrastructure is an effective strategy to mitigate climate change, according to the World Health Organization. These efforts could make your municipality more primed for provincial or federal actions on climate change.
- Communities that are designed to support walking, cycling and wheeling for all ages and abilities provide more opportunities to connect socially and help to build a sense of community. This social capital helps prevent crime and enhance economic development by giving more opportunities to have eyes on the streets and connect residents with each other.<sup>8</sup>



# Statistics & Data:

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There is great potential for economic, environmental and health benefits from active transportation in Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark Counties.

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Typically, people will consider walking as their mode of transportation for trips up to 1 kilometer (or approximately a 10 to 15 minute walk). Cycling distance is typically considered between 1 and 5 kilometers. However, avid active commuters may be willing to walk or cycle farther.<sup>9</sup>

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## In Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties:


**8.6%** of commuters are traveling a distance less than 1 kilometer.



An additional **20.8%** of commuters are traveling between 1 and 4.9 kilometers.

This means that almost 30% of commuters are traveling a distance that is easily conquered by foot or by bicycle, for most people.

Yet, only **6%** of commuters in Leeds Grenville and Lanark Counties are choosing active transportation.<sup>10</sup>



## Role of Municipal Staff and Decision Makers in Active Transportation:

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A healthy built environment and supportive policies are important for increasing active transportation. Built environment features that promote active transportation include walkability (land-use mix, and higher residential and intersection density), having many places close by (such as houses, parks, grocery stores and local food markets, restaurants and workplaces), and having networks designed that are connected between places and for all modes of transportation to allow all residents to travel in a variety of ways.<sup>11</sup>

Ten percent of the health of residents can be connected to the physical or built environment, with an additional 50% being related to social and economic factors, many of which are deeply interconnected with environments. Creating healthy physical environments is a critical component of a healthy, vibrant, and prosperous community.<sup>11</sup>



Safety concerns and insufficient cycling routes may be the reason for the low numbers of active commuters in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, even though commuting distances are compatible with cycling for many. Sixty percent of Ontarians say they would prefer to cycle more often and 32% of Ontarians want to cycle to work more often; they indicate that the primary reason they do not ride more often is they are

“worried about safety on the road.” Another main reason cited for cycling less often is “not enough bike routes to where I want to go” (39%).<sup>5,12,</sup>

## Myths vs Facts:

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### **Myth: Creating walkable, bikeable communities, trails, and parks is too expensive.**

**Fact:** Building healthier communities can bring in other economic benefits such as higher property values, increased tourism, and the ability to attract workers and businesses. Less motorized traffic can lead to decreased infrastructure and maintenance costs for roads, bridges, and parking facilities. Prioritizing active transportation in your planning and budget can help achieve these benefits as you implement your plan over time.<sup>13</sup>

### **Myth: People don't walk or cycle here so we don't need to invest in active transportation infrastructure.**

**Fact:** People are more likely to walk or cycle if they have safe, connected active transportation routes to get them where they need to go. Public transit is not as accessible in our rural communities so investing in active transportation for residents is important. Making destinations within our communities easier to get to is mutually beneficial to residents and local businesses. Adding active transportation infrastructure does not mean that cars will not be allowed on the roads; it allows a safe space to be created for people to drive and use active transportation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Myth: Putting in bike lanes will decrease housing values.**

**Fact:** Research indicates that the presence of a bike path or lane either increases property values and ease of sale or had no effect.<sup>14</sup> Putting new cycling infrastructure, especially separated bike lanes, into a neighbourhood can inflate housing prices. After installing new bicycle infrastructure in a neighbourhood, property values increased by \$5000 and more. In places all around the world, the introduction of bike lanes is leading to rises in property values. New bike lanes can be a large selling point and the benefit extends beyond individual property owners; bike lanes make a community as a whole a more attractive place to buy a home. Research found that bike paths placed third on a list of 39 features that homebuyers defined as crucial when buying homes in a new community.<sup>14,16</sup>



## **Myth: Building active transportation infrastructure takes away parking spaces and we don't have enough on-street parking as it is.**

**Fact:** The cost of constructing a parking space for a bicycle is approximately 5% of the cost of a parking space for a vehicle.<sup>7</sup> By building infrastructure and encouraging active transportation, municipalities may see a decrease in the number of vehicle parking spaces needed as more people choose active transportation over driving. This decreases the associated paving and maintenance costs.<sup>4</sup>

## **How to support active transportation in your Municipality:<sup>3,17</sup>**

### **Get Planning**

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- Ensure that road improvements plan for all modes of travel, not just vehicles.
- Create and/or review an Active Transportation Plan. This could be a separate plan or a part of a Transportation Master Plan to include strategies to promote complete streets, active transportation, and public transit wherever possible, and ensure safety for all transportation modes through the provision of bike lanes, wide sidewalks, smoke-free transit shelters, rest benches, etc.
- Include a maintenance plan and budgetary commitments in long-range transportation plans, particularly for the winter season, for community-wide safe routes to schools, municipal and commercial workplaces, public facilities and services, retail outlets, healthy food outlets, cultural and community spaces, and places of recreation.
- Ensure development standards/subdivision standards provide convenient and direct access to adjacent uses through integrated pedestrian sidewalks, walkways, trails, and cycling paths.
- Create comprehensive plans for cycling and walking in existing and future developments and integrate these plans into the larger transport planning.

### **Get Funding**

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- Prioritize funding for improvements that support active transportation such as sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming measures and bike lanes.



## Get the Infrastructure

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- Continue to develop and maintain trails, especially those that people can use to get from one place to another.
- Provide infrastructure and safety features that enhance safety along designated routes to school from residential areas of the community (e.g., crosswalks, lighting, and signage).
- Ensure on-site bicycle parking spaces and infrastructure at all municipal buildings and outdoor facilities.



## Get the Policies

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- Include policies to encourage active transportation in municipal and county Official Plans
- Adopt a complete streets policy (Example: [Ottawa Complete Streets Policy](#))
- Develop a sidewalk policy that includes a Sidewalk Priority Index\* to identify and eliminate gaps in the pedestrian network and a Pedestrian Crossing Priority Index\*\* to identify gaps in crosswalk infrastructure.
- Review municipal by-laws to ensure they support and encourage AT at the neighbourhood level.
- Develop a zoning by-law that requires a minimum number of bicycle parking spaces at retail, institutional, employment, educational, and residential centres.

\***Sidewalk Priority Index** – a system to determine priorities for sidewalks to ensure that identified gaps in the sidewalk and pathway networks are constructed, improved and maintained in all seasons.

\*\***Pedestrian Crossing Priority Index** – a system to determine priorities for crosswalk infrastructure to ensure that crosswalk infrastructure is installed, improved and maintained where gaps have been identified.

## Get the Community Engaged

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- Establish a Municipal Active Transportation Advisory Committee with representation from a number of municipal departments and interested groups to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to the emerging needs of the community and to facilitate communication of grassroots concerns related to the accessibility, walkability, and bikeability of the transportation system.
- Provide a variety of opportunities to residents to discuss active transportation opportunities and barriers (Community Engagement Resources can be found at <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityengagement>)
- Connect with the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit to receive support and guidance for active transportation planning, policy, and initiatives.

## More Resources:

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- Active transportation resources for Municipal Staff & Partners can be found on the Health Unit's website: <https://healthunit.org/for-professionals/municipal-staff-partners/active-transportation/>



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