



ACTIVE ***Transportation***

for People with Challenges and Limitations



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Developed by the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit

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.^{1,2}

This information is for people that would like to or need to use active transportation to move around their community but have some challenges or limitations walking or cycling or may use a wheelchair, walker, cane, or stroller. Some may have challenges using active transportation due to their age or health. Families with young children and individuals that are older, or frail, find long distances and challenging terrain a problem. If you are older you are at a higher risk of injuries when traveling on busy routes that are less safe, and may avoid these roads.³



Benefits of Active Transportation:

- Walking or cycling increases the level of physical activity, which also improves mental health and happiness (e.g., emotion and mood, self-esteem, sleep, cognitive functioning in older adults, dementia, depression, anxiety, stress, schizophrenia, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation).⁴ Children and parents who walk or bike to/from school are happier during the school trip than when they drive.⁵
- People that are not able to drive (e.g., children, people with lower incomes, people with disabilities and the elderly) may find it hard getting to work, school, appointments and shopping. Active transportation helps them get around the community.⁶
- For older adults active transportation can help maintain their independence and live longer.⁶
- Communities designed to help everyone move around build a sense of feeling connected. Social connections increase when walking and cycling, bringing people together and giving them time to interact.^{4,7,8}
- If you are older or not in the best of health you can still benefit from being active. Walkable neighbourhoods lead to more walking even for older adults with mobility issues.⁹



Statistics & Data:



“Everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, race, or ethnicity, ought to have safe comfortable and convenient access to community destinations and public places – whether walking, driving, bicycling, or using public transit.”¹⁰

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A well connected active transportation system that is combined with public transit allows people of all ages and abilities to drive less, have a better quality of life, and connect with services and recreation. This allows you to be more involved in the community.^{11,12}

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Quieter streets, lower speed limits, and routes that separate pedestrians and cyclists from motorized vehicles, make travel safer for you.¹⁰

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If you feel safe and the travel distance is reasonable you are more likely to walk or cycle.¹⁰

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Building an Active Transportation System for Everyone:

Children, older adults and people with mobility challenges face the greatest risk of injury and will avoid roads they feel are not safe.

The design of the community matters. Having your destinations within walking distance of where you live is important. Also, having even surfaces that are maintained through the seasons helps those with challenges get around. Accessible buildings and access to public washrooms make moving in the community possible.

Myths vs Facts:

Myth: Older adults and persons with disabilities don't use active transportation.

Fact: Many seniors use active transportation especially those that are recently retired and have more free time.¹⁰ Older adults find walking important as they are less likely than younger people to participate in more vigorous kinds of physical activities and are less likely to drive a car.¹³ Having a cycling culture with safe routes in a community encourages more people to cycle. Cycling starts earlier and continues as people age.



Get Involved

- Share your voice with local advocacy groups.
- Become involved in your communities' accessibility committee.
- Learn if your municipality has an accessibility plan or policy.
- Talk to your local municipality about how to make your community more accessible.^{13,1,15,14}
 - » Advocate for design and adaptations that make active travel systems safer.
 - » Get involved and ask your municipality for quiet off-street paths and trails that connect to common destinations.
 - » Ask for paths that are well-lit and include places to sit along the way.
 - » Ask for safe crossings. Crossing lights should be timed to allow slower walkers to safely reach the other side.
 - » Ask for community safety zones near schools and seniors' residences.
 - » Advocate for priority walking paths to be cleared in winter.
 - » Request benches or shelters along routes for resting.

Get Prepared and Get Moving

- Find out if your municipality has a list of accessible businesses.
- Find out if your community has maps of accessible routes or pathways leading to where you want to go.
- Locate accessible washrooms in your municipality.
- Contact the local accessibility committee to see what is happening locally.
- Find out where the benches, accessible pathways and public transportation options are to plan your travel to shopping, work or other destinations.



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