

Making the Case for Active Transportation

- Bulletin # 3: Economic Benefits -



There are negative **economic impacts** when communities are not designed to provide active transportation opportunities:

“Urban recurrent congestion costs Canadians between \$2.3 billion and \$3.7 billion (in 2002 dollar values). More than 90 percent of this cost is time lost in traffic by drivers and passengers; 7 percent to attributable to increased fuel consumption; and 3 percent is from increased green house gas emissions.”(p.16)¹

In 2001 “the economic burden of physical inactivity was estimated at \$5.3 billion (\$1.6 billion in direct costs and \$3.7 billion in indirect costs) while the cost associated with obesity was \$4.3 billion (\$1.6 billion of direct costs and \$2.7 billion of indirect costs). The total economic costs of physical inactivity and obesity represented 2.6% and 2.7% respectively, of the total health care costs in Canada.”(p.90)²

“When improvements in active transportation are made, communities win – with lower infrastructure costs, increased retail sales, higher property values, increased tourism and the ability to attract workers and businesses.”³

The Canadian Automobile Association⁴ estimates the cost of owning and operating a car to be \$8,945 a year. The cost of owning and operating a bicycle is a one time cost of about \$150.00 and virtually no cost associated with walking.⁵

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

Active transportation infrastructure supports local business and tourism as cyclists and pedestrians are more likely to spend their money at local destinations, thus increasing economic viability within their community.⁶

Active transportation infrastructure such as walking trails and bike lanes in both urban and rural settings can act as tourist attractions and boost the local economy.⁷

In 2002, bicycle tourism generated revenues of \$131 million in Quebec.⁸

Did you know?

A shift to active transportation will reduce costs associated with collisions, as cyclists and pedestrians are far less likely to injure other road users in collisions than are automobiles.⁹

A shift to greater levels of active transportation will lead to lower roadway costs. Increased use of active transportation leads to reduction in congestion, decreased road maintenance costs, less costly infrastructure and increased road safety.¹

Studies have shown that there are significant benefits to employers associated with having staff that are physically active. Economic benefits can include reduced absenteeism due to illness, lower healthcare costs and increased productivity.⁹ Supporting active transportation to work is one way of encouraging physical activity among employees.

The cost of constructing a parking space for a bicycle is approximately 5% of the cost of parking space for an automobile.¹⁰

Research has shown that facilities such as sidewalks and trails have a positive impact on property value of homes that are in close proximity to these amenities.⁹

“Offering a range of transportation options is one way in which small and rural communities can help retain employers and residents, maintain the local economy, ensure equal access to services, jobs and educational opportunities, address the needs of an aging population and improve the health of residents.”(p.7)⁷



Photo credit: Go for Green

Take Action!

Communicate the costs associated with the lack of active transportation infrastructure, along with the benefits of providing such opportunities, to your municipal decision makers. Share the *Making the Case for Active Transportation* bulletins!

Incorporating active transportation networks and pathways into local tourism plans can become a “selling” feature to visitors. Use the information in this bulletin to work with your municipal decision makers and local tourism office to make a case for improving and promoting active transportation.

References:

1. Transport Canada (2006a). The cost of urban congestion in Canada. Transportation Canada, Environmental Affairs. Retrieved from www.tc.gc.ca/utsp
2. Katzmarzyk, P.T. & Janssen, I. (2004). The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: An update. *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*, 29, 90-115.
3. Built Environment & Active Transportation. (2008). BEAT: The path to health. BC Recreation and Parks Association and the Union of BC Municipalities
4. Canadian Automobile Association (2008). Driving Costs. www.caa.ca
5. Litman, T. (2008). Introduction to multi-modal transportation planning: Principles and practices. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. Retrieved from www.vtpi.org
6. Federation of Canadian Municipalities for Sustainable Community Development (2008). Communities in Motion: Bring active transportation to life. Retrieved from http://www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca/files/Capacity_Building_Transportation/CommunitiesinMotion-PUB-e.pdf
7. Transport Canada (2006b). Sustainable transportation in small and rural communities. Issue Paper 61. Retrieved from www.tc.gc.ca/utsp
8. Velo Quebec website www.velo.gc.ca
9. 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.
10. Pucher, J. & Buchler, R. (2008). Making cycling irresistible: Lesson's from the Netherlands, Denmark & Germany. *Transport Reviews: A Transnational Transdisciplinary Journal*, 28 (4), 495-528.

How to use this bulletin: This bulletin is for professionals and community members who want to build a case for active transportation in their community. Share the information in this bulletin with community decision makers such as municipal council members and municipal staff responsible for land-use planning, transportation, public utilities, social services, parks, recreation and building codes to increase awareness of the economic benefits of active transportation.

Other Making the Case for Active Transportation Bulletins:

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

