

# Making the Case for Active Transportation

## - Bulletin # 6: Safety -



**Safety concerns** keep one in five Canadians from walking or bicycling.<sup>1</sup>

- ✘ Spending more time in cars operating at higher speeds due to the design of sprawling neighbourhoods increases the risk of being in a collision with a pedestrian or cyclist.
- ✘ As fewer people walk and cycle, the tendency of drivers to watch for people engaging in these modes declines as well. Thus, to those engaging in active transportation in communities that lack multi-use pathways or designated bike lanes there is increased risk of not being seen by drivers.
- ✘ Research has shown that per capita traffic fatality rates of cyclists and pedestrians tend to be higher in sprawling communities than in “complete communities.”<sup>2</sup>

There is strong evidence to suggest that an increase in the number of cyclists on a road decreases the risk of injury to cyclists.<sup>3</sup>

### Designing communities which provide increased opportunities for active transportation addresses safety concerns.<sup>2</sup>

- Mixed use neighborhoods provide residents with the security of “eyes on the street” both from ground floor shops and mid-rise apartment buildings above the shops. Thus providing a deterrent to crime.
- Crime prevention is enhanced through the provision of adequate lighting, pathways that are free from obstacles and obstructions to sightlines (hidden corners, and transit stops with opaque sides and shrubbery that provide hiding places). These types of community design elements increase the attractiveness of active transportation choices.

**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.



Educational programs and “share the road” signs that remind drivers of the law to share the road with cyclists are needed to increase the safety of those engaging in active transportation.<sup>4</sup>

- More people on the street increases the collective feeling of security.
- Active transportation becomes both desirable and safer when a holistic model of community design is used. A holistic model of community design includes accommodating alternative modes of transportation and convenient conditions for walkers, cyclists and transit users.
- As neighborhood density increases, per capita hours and miles of automobile travel tends to decline and walking, biking and transit use tend to increase.

Safety Features for active transportation include: lit trails, way-finding systems (e.g. maps, directional signage), and dedicated bridges to help people safely cross barriers such as highways.

**Complete Communities** meet people’s needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided.<sup>2</sup>



Photo credit: CFLRI

### Take Action!

Consider conducting a neighbourhood safety audit to ensure that the built infrastructure such as sidewalks and street crossings meet the standards of “walkable” communities. A safety audit includes ensuring that pedestrians and those using bikes, strollers, walkers and wheelchairs can move safely and efficiently from place to place. Share the results with municipal decision makers and identify ways to jointly address unsafe infrastructure.

Learn more about crime prevention through environmental design by reviewing the RCMP pamphlet on this topic.<sup>5</sup>

Use a walkability checklist such as the one available at the Alberta Centre for Active Living<sup>6</sup> to assess your community. Share your results with municipal decision makers.

### References:

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3. Pucher, J. & Buehler, R. (2007). Cycling in Canada and the United States: Why Canadians are so far ahead. Plan. Spring edition.
4. Federation of Canadian Municipalities for Sustainable Community Development (2008). Communities in Motion: Bring active transportation to life. [http://www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca/files/Capacity\\_Building\\_Transportation/CommunitiesinMotion-PUB-e.pdf](http://www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca/files/Capacity_Building_Transportation/CommunitiesinMotion-PUB-e.pdf)
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### Other Making the Case for Active Transportation Bulletins:

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

### The Woonerf Approach



Photo credit: Ben Hamilton-Baillie - Hamilton-Baillie Associates. Bristol, UK.

“A *woonerf* (a Dutch word that means “street space for living”) is common space shared by pedestrians, cyclists and low speed motor vehicles. They are usually streets raised to the same grade as curbs and sidewalks, and vehicles are slowed by placing trees, planters, parking areas and other obstacles in the street. Motorists are treated as intruders and must travel at walking speeds. A *woonerf* identification sign is placed at each street entrance.”<sup>8</sup>

Balanced street design (such as the *Woonerf* Approach) to accommodate *all* modes of transportation creates safer, more convenient conditions for engaging in active transportation opportunities. This type of design considers equally the needs of non-motorized and motorized transportation.

### Quick CFLRI Facts:

The CFLRI's 2007 *Physical Activity Monitor* examined Canadians agreement with statements about safety in their neighbourhoods.<sup>7</sup> Most Canadians do *not* feel that:

- ✘ the crime rate in their neighbourhood makes it unsafe to go on walks at night; and,
- ✘ there is so much traffic on the streets that it makes it difficult or unpleasant to walk in their neighbourhood.

**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 knowledge on the link between community safety features and active transportation.

