

FRIENDLY LAND-USE AND Transportation Planning Guidelines

Making our communities safer, healthier and better for children

Submitted by Jackie Avent, Active & Safe Routes to School Program, Resource Conservation Manitoba

Like a canary in the coal mine, children can be considered an indicator species for the health of a city. If there are no children to be seen on the streets, the community is not meeting the needs of its residents.

“If we can build a successful city for children we will have a successful city for all people.”

- Enrique Peñalosa, former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia

How is this the case? Youth are particularly affected by transportation's impacts and land-use arrangements that are oriented to the automobile rather than active ways of getting around and public transit. More time spent in cars and less time spent walking or cycling is coinciding with low levels of physical activity and dramatically increasing rates of childhood obesity and related illnesses. Reduced academic performance and compromised emotional and intellectual development are other effects that may be associated with the loss of physical activity due to increased car travel. In addition, children are especially vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality inside vehicles and arising from the overall level of motorized traffic in a community.

The transportation needs of children and youth differ from those of adults, partly because their destinations are different and partly because they travel differently. On school days, for example, the majority of walking and cycling trips are still made by young people. This means facilities for non-motorized modes of transportation are even more important for young people's travel than they are for adults.

The Child and Youth Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning Guidelines were developed to help municipal transportation and land-use planners make their communities more child and youth friendly, and in doing so create conditions that are more agreeable for residents of all ages, as well as more sustainable. Initiated by the Centre for Sustainable Transportation in 2005, with the development of guidelines for Ontario called “Kids on the Move,” the project is now focussed on creating sets of guidelines for each of Canada's 10 provinces. Led by **Richard Gilbert** and **Catherine O'Brien**, research associates of the Centre, the project has involved consultations in each province, including Manitoba.

Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM), a non-profit, non-governmental organization in Winnipeg that is focused on promoting sustainable living, will be disseminating the guidelines in our province. RCM delivers the Active & Safe Routes to school Program in Manitoba, and was involved in the develop-

“There is a lot that is possible to reduce motorized road traffic, such as expanding public transit, providing infrastructure for the alternatives, especially for rural youth who may see driving as the only way of getting where they need to go.” – Kieran, Show Us Your Moves participant



Students from Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg enjoy fresh air, exercise and friends as they participate in their school's Walking School Bus. Since less than 10% of their school population lives close enough to walk to school, they arrange for the option of dropping students off at a designated off-site location from where they walk the rest of the way as a group. The 20-minute walk from the drop-off point proves to be an excellent way to start the day. As one grade 2 student commented, “I feel so invigorated!”



Altona youth from WC Miller Collegiate participated in the Show Us Your Moves project. As teacher Laura Thiessen explains, "We discussed how the three main modes of youth transportation (bus, walking, and driving) have different costs and benefits. For example, by the time youth get to high school age, they usually hate riding the bus because of long trips weaving around the countryside as all the other kids get picked up. Lots of kids walk to school and most of them seem to like this as they often walk with friends. In summer, many bike, and in winter some use snowmobiles. Driving is the most popular way to get around, and getting a car is important mostly just because they can have freedom to travel to Winnipeg or other communities. With no public transit, and no bus or van between Altona and the city, students without cars can, at times, feel quite stuck. At the same time, we don't think it's good that so many have cars; in Altona we learn to rely on cars too much."

ment of the guidelines in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as the youth consultation process in Manitoba.

The guidelines for Manitoba are presently in their second draft form and are undergoing a process of editing and polishing. To the extent possible, each province will have the same set of guidelines. However, each document will differ to reflect provincial circumstances, legislation, language, and practices.

The 21 guidelines are grouped into six categories concerning putting young people first in land-use and transportation planning; providing for them as pedestrians, as cyclists, and as transit users; providing for journeys to and from school; and reducing the impacts of all transportation activity on young people. Several barriers to addressing these concerns are noted, and how they might be overcome. Opportunities for including young people in decision-making are also noted, and other pointers towards application of the guidelines are elaborated.

Factors specific to children and youth in rural communities are discussed, as they are even more likely to be car-dependent, travelling longer distances for most travel including getting to school. Young rural residents are less likely to walk or bike to school than their urban or suburban counterparts. Transit services are generally unavailable in rural areas. Nevertheless, most of the 21 guidelines could be helpful in refashioning rural communities to be more child and youth friendly.

Feedback from children and youth has been inspiring and instrumental in the guidelines development process. Led by the Manitoba Youth Environmental Network, a number of young people took photos of their transportation options, needs and wants in a program called *Show Us Your Moves*, which were shared at two different workshops with other youth from across Manitoba and discussed in the context of the draft guidelines.

Manitoba joins BC and Nova Scotia as the next provinces after Ontario to disseminate the guidelines. Local Manitoba municipalities are encouraged to see how the guidelines fit with their existing policies and practices, and to consider adopting them as part of their municipal planning tools.

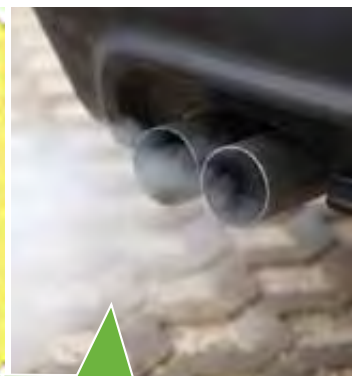
Some examples from the Ontario dissemination of the guidelines include the endorsement of a "Children First Charter" in Greater Sudbury; intentions by the City of Vaughan to include the guidelines and broad consultation with children and youth in developing a new Official Plan; and the initiation of public consultations on the guidelines in Guelph along with increased municipal commitment to the Active & Safe Routes to School Program. The Ontario Professional Planners Institute,

which officially endorsed the guidelines, is educating its members through newsletter articles and webinars, and launched a widespread media campaign to spread the word around that province.

Resource Conservation Manitoba is building on the process of dissemination from Ontario, and offering presentations and workshops for interested parties.

Municipalities in Manitoba and other stakeholders interested in hearing a presentation on the Child and Youth Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning Guidelines, and discussing how they could fit with their existing policies and practices are invited to contact Jackie Avent, Active & Safe Routes to School Program Coordinator, Resource Conservation Manitoba, at (204) 925-3773 or asrts@resourceconservation.mb.ca.

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