

## ENCOURAGING KIDS *to adopt active modes of transportation*

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Having a physically active lifestyle means incorporating various forms of physical activity into one's daily routine: sports, recreational activities, practical activities and active modes of travel.

### Did you know that:

- **only 40%** of young people are **sufficiently active**;
- **active transportation** to school has dropped by 50% in less than 30 years;
- one youth in five walks or bikes to school;
- more than 80% of elementary-age children live less than 1.6 km from their school;
- according to close to 60% of youth, transport is one of the main barriers to being active during their leisure time.

### WHY TAKE ACTION?

Making the switch from a sedentary to a moderately active lifestyle can **have enormous health benefits** for young people. Active transportation makes it possible to **significantly increase young people's engagement in physical activity and to reach thousands of youth who do not practice any form of physical activity**. Active transportation alone can raise by 6% the proportion of youth who get sufficient physical activity.

Young people who use active modes of transportation are also more active in general than those who travel by car, since the latter do not compensate for periods of inactivity by doing more exercise in their free time.

In addition to increasing daily physical activity, active transportation **encourages independence and socialization**, two factors that also contribute to **academic success**.

### MANY FACTORS INFLUENCING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION HABITS

Many neighbourhoods and cities are planned mainly for car travel (large boulevards, wide streets, lack of sidewalks, etc.). Some youth do not have access to sports facilities, equipment or activities, and others do not live in a neighbourhood conducive to active transportation. Real or perceived safety, as well as parental fears and low residential density can limit children's mobility. These are all factors on which we can **act together**.

There is a **growing movement in favour of active transportation**, reflected in transportation policies, urban planning and public opinion. Current amendments to the Land Use Planning and Development Act and the forthcoming Quebec sustainable mobility plan should add further impetus to this trend.

### HOW TO CHANGE THE SITUATION?

Changes must be made to the environments where young people spend most of their time, in order to encourage them to adopt active modes of transportation.



## EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS

### DAYCARES AND CHILDCARE SETTINGS – SCHOOLS AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS – COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Develop a plan to promote active transportation (schools and after-school programs) and install bike racks.
- Through educational programs targeting youth, parents and staff, offer alternatives to short car trips (e.g., “On the move to school!,” walking school bus, Trottibus, etc.).
- Based on existing initiatives, develop activities to promote and raise awareness around active transportation. Get young people involved in organizing these activities.
- Ask municipal elected officials to improve environments, and to build or upgrade sports and recreation facilities (ACTI-MENU).
- Use active modes of transportation for outings and special activities.

### MUNICIPALITIES

- Make parks, sports and outdoor facilities, and pedestrian and bicycle paths more accessible.
- Develop safe, user-friendly and efficient pedestrian and bicycle paths through traffic reduction measures, adequate signage and street furniture.
- Increase residential density.
- Create well-lit, accessible parking areas for bicycles located close to building or park entrances; install sufficient bike racks where bicycles can be easily locked.
- Plan public thoroughfares and new neighbourhoods to facilitate safe, non-motorized transportation.
- Promote mixed-used planning and service proximity to facilitate safe trips on foot or by bicycle.

*To increase active transportation among youth, we must not only develop the appropriate conditions, policies and plans, but must also promote this form of transportation as a positive lifestyle choice. It is time to make our streets and neighbourhoods more humane—places where young people and families can thrive.*

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