

# "Healthy Transport, Healthy People"

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Executive Summary



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# THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN SUSTAINABLE CITIES PROJECT

*Healthy Transport, Healthy People*



Incidental exercise – the healthy way to work

Current transport practices result in trauma, pollution and physical inactivity. These can lead to early death.

### ***Active transport improves community health***

*Healthy Transport, Healthy People* shows that a sustainable city needs sustainable transport that encourages health-supporting, not health-damaging, travel behaviour.

Health, safety and transport are daily concerns for everyone, but few of us realise how closely they are connected. In the 1990s the World Health Organisation identified transport as one of the major determinants of health and health inequality in Western countries.

### ***Our car culture damages our health***

Increased car use has displaced active transport—walking, cycling and using public transport. Current transport planning and infrastructure foster habitual car use. Consequently, almost half the population is exposed to substantial health risk from physical inactivity.

### ***Physical activity reduces the risk of fatal disease***

Our travel habits help determine our health. Forty per cent of urban NSW residents are not physically active at levels recommended for good health; 41 per cent are overweight or obese.

Physical activity almost halves the risk of cardiovascular disease and also reduces the risk of diabetes, osteoporosis and colon cancer as well as alleviating anxiety and depression.

The most effective, and enduring way of increasing our physical activity is by using 'active transport' rather than driving.

### ***Road trauma increases as we age***

Australia's rate of road trauma is typical of western, car-dependent societies. However, current travel trends are not sustainable, and, if they continue, will place the elderly at increased risk of road trauma. Public and active transport infrastructure is required as a safer, healthier alternative for the over 60s of the future who are predicted to have a 143 per cent higher rate of crash involvement.

### ***Urban pollution damages health***

All the urban air pollutants that have an impact on health arise from combustion of fossil and petrochemical fuels, predominantly used by motor vehicles.

More than a third of the greenhouse gas emissions from a typical Australian household are from transport—the opportunities exist for most people to reduce their motor vehicle-related use.

### ***Promote sustainable and healthy transport***

The community needs to be convinced of the personal health benefits of incorporating active transport into their lifestyles. The health and transport sectors need to work together to develop complementary strategies to promote sustainable and healthy transport. Businesses whose activities and profitability are determined by the health of their workers will benefit through active involvement in sustainable transport initiatives.

The policies and goals for urban and transport development should reflect the policies and goals of both sustainable environmental planning and the maintenance of healthy communities.

***Adopt active transport and live better and longer***

More effective policies and actions are needed to promote 'active transport' and reduce car use:



'Active transport' for an ageing population

**MAKE ACTIVE TRANSPORT MORE ATTRACTIVE**

- Fund infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists based on both current use and desired use;
- Reform subsidies for car use and parking;
- Develop more walkways, pedestrian refuges, cycleways and car-free zones;
- Promote 'active transport' at workplaces, schools and community centres;
- Invest in the public transport system.

**RUN HIGH PROFILE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS**

Fund the running and evaluation of demonstration programs to:

- encourage the use of active transport;
- improve road management for area-wide safety, incorporating the needs of pedestrians and cyclists;
- enable practitioners to undertake audits for cycling and walking routes.

**PROMOTE ACTIVE TRANSPORT THROUGH THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION SECTORS**

- The medical profession can prescribe walking and cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle or as treatment in cardiac programs;
- Information on public transport routes and timetables can be displayed in patient waiting rooms;
- School curriculums can link transport with lifestyle and health subjects;
- 'Walk to school' can be part of school environmental management programs.

***The road is there to share***

To achieve behavioural change road authorities need to develop an awareness among the media, trip generators, and the community of the problems of single-occupancy car use for the transport system and encourage improved road user behaviour that respects all road users, such as bicyclists and pedestrians and supports bus-priority.

***Want to know more?***

The complete *Healthy Transport, Healthy People* report, addressing all these issues and more, is available from The Warren Centre for \$49.50, GST included. Please complete the form on the back of this document and fax it to +61 2 9351 2012 or visit [www.warren.usyd.edu.au/transport](http://www.warren.usyd.edu.au/transport)

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## Special thanks to:

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Warren Centre project team and in particular Chris Rissel who led the *Healthy Transport, Healthy People* module, Ken Dobinson, Project Director, and the other members of the team:

Dr John Frith, Lecturer in the School of Community Medicine, University of N.S.W  
Dr Michael Henderson, Traffic Injury Consultant

Dr Chloe Mason, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Vicki Toulkidis, Senior Policy Officer, Health Policy Unit, Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Ian Napier, Principal Consultant, Urbis Keys Young; Honorary Secretary, Pedestrian Council of Australia

Bill Bellow, Director, Health Promotion, NSW Health Department

Dr Tony Richardson & Rita Seethaler, Director and Principal Environmental Consultant for the Urban Transport Institute.

Ken Dobinson, Project Director  
John McKerral, Editor-in-Chief

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