

# CHILD- AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY LAND-USE AND TRANSPORT PLANNING GUIDELINES for Ontario

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## SUMMARY OF VERSION 2

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The *Guidelines* document is in three parts. The first part provides reasons as to why land-use and transport planning should be made more child- and youth-friendly, with a focus on the adverse health impacts of current practices. The second part sets out 21 guidelines that could be applied in the course of a municipality or other agency becoming more child- and youth-friendly in its transport and land-use planning. The third part provides some discussion of implementation issues.

### The rear part of a walking school bus



**There are several reasons to be concerned about young people and today's transport** and about the related matter of how land is used. Here are some of them:

- Young people appear to be spending growing amounts of time in cars.
- Some of this car travel has replaced walking and bicycling, removing needed opportunities for physical exercise.
- Some car travel has replaced more environmentally benign transit use, adding to what may already be an excess of car use, reducing both the present and the future viability of transit systems, and further reducing young people's opportunities for exercise.
- Being in cars can be harmful, because in-car air quality can be lower and because the view of the passing world through a windshield can be limiting.
- Young people travel to where young people gather, meaning that if they travel by car pollution from traffic in the vicinity of these places—e.g., schools—will be higher.
- Whether or not young people travel by car, they are especially susceptible to pollution from traffic and thus from the increased pollution that results from traffic growth.

As well as exercising less, and weighing more, other effects may be associated with the lost exercise associated with the increased automobile use. They include reduced academic performance and compromised emotional development.

The transport needs of young people differ from those of adults, partly because their destinations are different and partly because they travel differently. On schooldays, for example, the majority of walking and cycling trips are still made by young people notwithstanding the recent large increase in travel by car. Thus, facilities for non-motorized modes are much more important for young people's travel than they are for adults.

Overall, about a fifth of all local trips may be made by young people, a significant share that impels attention to their transport needs.

The following specific data were drawn from surveys in south-central Ontario, but probably reflect wider trends:

- Children and youth make more than half of all schoolday walking and bicycling trips. Their rate of making walking and cycling trips is about ten times that of adults. Thus, when facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are being considered, the needs of young people may be the most important of all.
- Children's and youth's schoolday travel by car, as passengers, increased hugely between 1986 and 2001. For 11- to 15-year-olds the per-capita increase was 83 per cent. For 16- to 19-year-olds it was 61 per cent (but with essentially no increase in trips by this age group as a driver). Meanwhile, the per-capita increase in car use by adults, as a passenger or driver, was only 11 per cent.
- Considering 11- to 15-year-olds only, just over half of the additional trips by car were trips to and from school. These car trips replaced trips that in 1986 had been made by transit, walking or bicycling. Just under half of the additional trips were trips other than between home and school. Essentially all of these trips were new trips, i.e., trips that had not been made in 1986.

The 21 guidelines concern land use as well as transport because land use is a key factor in determining the transport patterns of young people as it is for adults. Above all, they are directed towards reducing the amount of travel by automobile by children and youth, and also towards reducing the amounts of all road traffic near children and youth.

**A family riding together  
in Kansas City,  
Missouri (children  
aged 17 months and  
four years)**



Most of the guidelines are not specific to young people. Indeed, many of them echo what is found in more general-purpose land-use and transport planning documents, especially those designed to move transport and land use towards sustainability.

The guidelines cover all types of residential development, and also places where children and youth go. Their application will vary according to whether they are used to guide green-field development or in-fill development, or to assess and remedy existing development.

**The 21 guidelines are set out below in six categories.** The first category contains the most important guidelines, and the first guideline is the most important of all. It follows the precept of Enrique Peñalosa, former mayor of Bogotá, “If we can build a successful city for children we will have a successful city for all people.” The *Guidelines* document (of which this document is a summary) provides an extensive rationale for including each guideline.

*Putting children and youth first*

- Guideline 1. In transport and land-use planning, the needs of children and youth should receive as much priority as the needs of people of other ages and the requirements of business.
- Guideline 2. Within each municipality, designate a staff member or council member, or both, as responsible for bringing the perspectives of young people to consideration of transport and land-use planning issues.
- Guideline 3. As may be appropriate, establish or adapt one or more forums for children and youth to ensure that their perspectives are considered by land-use and transport planners.

*Providing for children and youth as pedestrians*

- Guideline 4. Identify where children and youth want to go or need to go and, to the extent possible, provide ways of getting there by foot.
- Guideline 5. Assess pedestrian routes used or to be used by children and youth to ensure that they are as safe and suitable for them as possible.

Guideline 6. Separate sidewalks used by children and youth from heavily trafficked roads.

Guideline 7. Ensure that sidewalks are always cleared of ice and snow.

*Providing for children and youth on bicycles (and other wheels)*

Guideline 8. For older children and youth, ensure that destinations that cannot be a walk away are no more than a bicycle ride away.

Guideline 9. For younger children, ensure that sidewalks are suitable for their tricycles and bicycles.

Guideline 10. For destinations to be reached by bicycle, provide separate bicycle paths or trails or, if that is not possible, install bicycle lanes on regular roads.

Guideline 11. Ensure that bicycle riders are well provided for at intersections and have sufficient priority for forward movement.

Guideline 12. At destinations, provide secure, convenient bicycle parking.

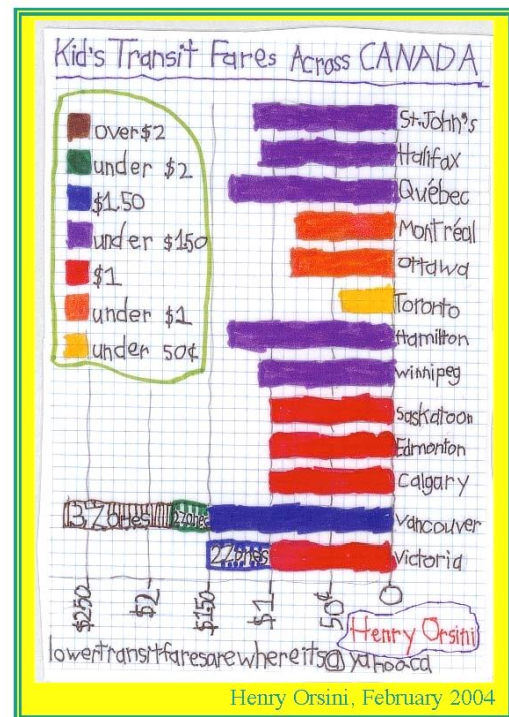
*Providing for children and youth as transit users*

Guideline 13. Ensure that every part of a transit system is safe and welcoming to young people, and affordable.

Guideline 14. Avoid transfers by routing vehicles where children and youth want to and need to go; make transfers easy where necessary.

Guideline 15. Examine every aspect of a transit system from the perspective of a parent with a child in a stroller, and make adjustments to meet such a traveller's needs.

**A 9-year-old Vancouver resident's research on transit fares**



*Providing for journeys to and from school*

Guideline 16. Act to ensure that school policies and practices favour walking and cycling to and from school and other modes of active transport, or, where appropriate and possible, regular public transport.

Guideline 17. For younger children, help arrange walking school buses and other means of supervision.

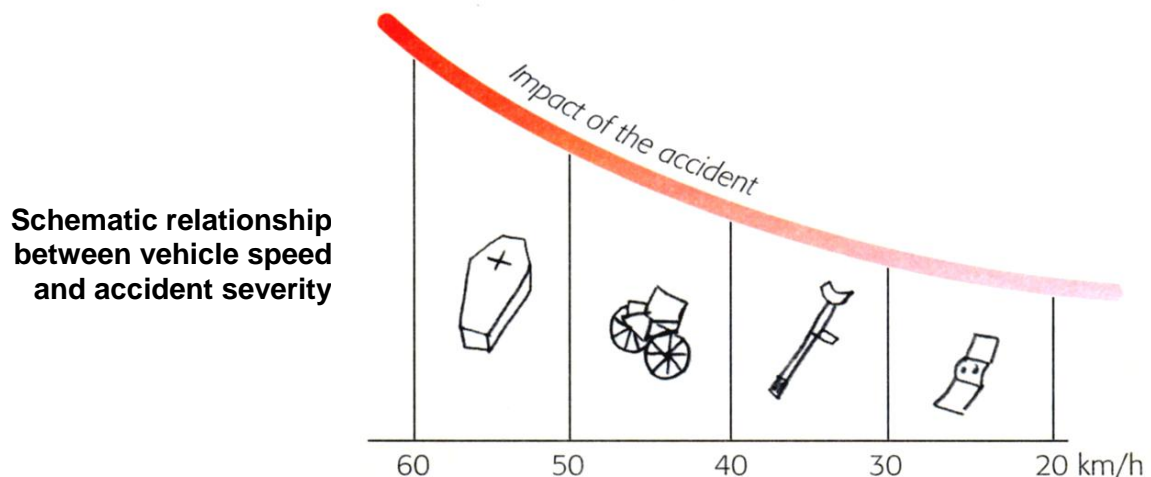
Guideline 18. Act to reduce the time children spend in school buses to a maximum of no more than 40 minutes per day.

*Reducing transport's adverse impacts on children and youth*

Guideline 19. Where destinations cannot be reached by foot, bicycle or transit, arrange land uses so that in-car time is reduced.

Guideline 20. Particularly in urban areas, post and enforce much lower speed limits.

Guideline 21. Do what is possible to reduce amounts of motorized road traffic generally and reduce its impacts.



**The third part of the *Guidelines* document concerns implementation.** It lists numerous challenges to implementing the guidelines, each with a recommended action to overcome the barrier. It also lists a number of actions proposed during consultations that could raise

awareness about children and transport and make specific contributions towards better land use and transport planning.

Then there is a focus on involving children and youth in planning. In part, this is to learn from their experience and benefit from their contribution to solutions. As well, transport and land use provide good issues around which to introduce young people to the practice of government and democracy. These issues often affect young people directly in ways they can feel quite strongly about, and the competing positions and trade-offs are usually easy to grasp.

The final section speaks to the need to secure a resolution of the municipal council that embodies the spirit of the first guideline. It also discusses how the Ontario government could help. The strongest action would be to amend the *Planning Act* to add ‘the particular interests of children and youth’ to the list of matters of provincial interest, and to develop a provincial policy statement on the matter that guides and directs municipal planning.

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