



The Centre for  
Sustainable  
Transportation

Le Centre pour un  
transport durable

# YOUTH AND TRANSPORT



## step out of the vehicle

if you want to change the world



Car-free Day image: www.adbusters.org

More than half of Canadians aged 5 to 17 do not walk or cycle



1. You get the most physical exercise and burn extra calories by:

- (a) driving (or being driven) to school for a week
- (b) one hour Phys. Ed. Class
- (c) walking to school for a week (about 1 km each way)
- (d) playing video games for 8 hours

Answers and explanations below

2. Idling for how long uses more fuel than restarting the car engine?

- (a) 10 seconds
- (b) 30 seconds
- (c) 1 minute
- (d) 3 minutes

3. Which of the following is a form of active transportation?

- (a) skateboarding
- (b) cycling
- (c) walking
- (d) in-line skating
- (e) driving an SUV
- (f) all of the above except (e)
- (g) all of the above

4. The air quality in your car or school bus is likely to be

- (a) better than the air outside
- (b) more polluted than the air outside

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1. (c) Walking to school for a week can burn as many calories as 2 hours of Phys. Ed. classes (assuming you don't live next to the school)  
2. (a) Idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than turning off the engine and restarting it.  
3. (f) The answer could also be (g) if your SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle) is actually a bicycle!  
4. (b) There is some evidence that the quality of air inside your car may be 4-10 times worse than the air outside!

# FACTS:

## Canadian youth are growing more inactive

- Only 10% of Canadian youth are active enough to receive any heart-health benefits.
- The rate of obesity in children and youth has increased by 50% in the past 15 years.
- An obese preschooler has a  $\frac{1}{4}$  chance of becoming an obese adult. An obese teenager has a  $\frac{3}{4}$  chance of remaining obese for life!!!!
- Canadian children begin to show a significant decline in physical fitness at 12 years of age. Many drop out of physical or sports activity.

## Females are less active than males

- In Canada, only 30% of teenage girls and 40% of teenage boys are considered active enough for optimal growth and development.

## Physically fit students perform better academically

- This was a finding of a study of almost a million 5th, 7th, and 9th graders in California. Other things being equal, fitter students did better, especially at math.



## The Car-Culture is jeopardizing our future

- 36% of teenage deaths are the result of car crashes.
- In Canada, transportation contributes about 30% of the greenhouse gases that are responsible for global warming.
- Children and youth living in areas with poor air quality have been found to have reduced lung function growth (this places them at risk for future respiratory illness).

## In Canada, and many parts of the world, youth are taking action on sustainable transportation.

“I’m most proud of what we’ve done around the school. Before this group was in existence, there was no group active in the school raising awareness about alternative forms of transportation.”

Natasha Kwan: Gr. 12  
off ramp leader - Port Moody Secondary

### Let’s take a look at a program begun in Vancouver:



### What’s off ramp?

Developed by Arthur Orsini for BEST (Better Environmentally Sound Transportation) of Vancouver, BC, off ramp has been working with secondary schools since 1999 to support student leaders in putting together cool strategies to get their peers out of cars.

off ramp recognizes that youth leaders are the best ones to engage their peers. In this youth-led program, teams of 4-7 youth form an off ramp club to host activities to change attitudes and circumstances so that their peers increasingly walk, cycle, ‘board, ‘blade, take transit and carpool.

- ⇒ raise awareness
- ⇒ dismantle barriers
- ⇒ reward ‘good’ behaviour
- ⇒ generate opportunities for more youth to travel car-free

Check out [www.best.bc.ca/programsAndServices](http://www.best.bc.ca/programsAndServices) for a look at some of the hundred-and-one activities;

- #19 walk the labyrinth: an easy to draw chalk labyrinth to draw attention to road safety
- #36 how slow can you go? bike race:
  - rule #1 – keep moving forward
  - rule #2 – no feet on the ground
- #42 build a chopper bike: to create your own artistic velomutation, a rolling sculpture to challenge your balance and surprise your community
- #46 mass bike ride: hold a mass bike ride in order to let a lot of people see you having fun cycling
- #86 strike a pose: improv acting and photography to debunk the car-culture

## What else are youth doing?



### Youth Summit on Sustainable Urban Transport

“It’s important to me that our society not rely on cars for transportation, because of health, pollution, energy resource depletion, and social reasons.”

Youth Summit participant

Begun in 2002, the Youth Summit on Sustainable Urban Transport takes place every two years bringing 80+ youth aged 17-24 together in Ottawa. See [www.cutaactu.ca/en/node/416](http://www.cutaactu.ca/en/node/416). Participants first meet with local groups to deepen their understanding of regional transport issues. At the summit, youth leaders connect with activists and professionals already working on sustainable transport issues. They return to their communities better prepared for action.

“I enjoy watching and interacting with people on the bus.” Youth Summit participant

### Green Communities Canada and STEP (Sustainable Transportation Education Program)

STEP is a student-led program that promotes environmentally sustainable transportation and physical activity to high school students. Find out more about the program and activities you can do at

[www.saferoutestoschool.ca/index.php?page=step](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/index.php?page=step).



## what you can do!

- walk, cycle, 'blade, 'board, carpool or use transit for as many trips as possible
- encourage family and friends to reduce car use
- organize off ramp activities in your community
- Host a bike mechanics workshop at school
- Join or start a Cycling Ambassadors group (see [www.toronto.ca/cycling/ratsa](http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/ratsa))
- speak out against idling – let drivers know that idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than turning off the engine and restarting it
- add your voice to youth who are making a difference
- find creative ways to tell other youth the facts about sustainable transportation
- join (or start) a municipal youth advisory committee to let your politicians know what youth need

This booklet has been produced by The Centre for Sustainable Transportation, which has also produced booklets on children, youth and transport for municipal officials, educators, public health professionals, and parents. The Centre has also produced *Child- and Youth-friendly Land-use and Transport Planning Guidelines*, with input from youth and many others interested in these issues. All this work has been financially supported by The Ontario Trillium Foundation. The contribution to the present booklet of Arthur Orsini, Sustainable Transport and Youth's Program Developer, has been especially appreciated.