

CANADIAN CHILD- AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY LAND-USE AND TRANSPORT PLANNING GUIDELINES

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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

Introduction to the guidelines

Overview

This document sets out the *Canadian Child- and Youth-friendly Land-Use and Transport Planning Guidelines*. The guidelines are elaborated more fully in ten *Guidelines* documents, one for each province, each about 80 pages in length. The 19 guidelines are essentially the same across Canada, although ordered a little differently in the version for Quebec, which is in French only. The other nine Guidelines documents are in English only. All 10 documents and other material are available at the project's Web site, at www.kidsonthemove.ca or www.jeunesenmouvement.ca.

Origins of the guidelines

The development of the guidelines has its origin in work in Ontario in 2002-2005 that sought to make municipal planners and others more aware of several concerns about young people and today's transport and land use and of the transport needs of children and youth. The concerns include:

- Young people appear to be spending growing amounts of time in cars.
- Some of this car travel has replaced walking and bicycling, removing valuable opportunities for physical exercise.
- Some car travel has replaced transit use, reducing the present and the future viability of transit systems, and further reducing young people's opportunities for exercise.
- Growth in young people's travel by car may contribute to growth in the overall amount of motorized transport activity and thus increased emissions of globally active pollutants, including those associated with climate change.
- Being in cars can be harmful to occupants, because in-car air quality can be poorer than the ambient air quality 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.

The work in Ontario sought to have the planners involve children and youth more in decisions that affected children and youth, and to accommodate their needs in transport and land-use planning. Just about everyone who was consulted wanted these things to happen. Discussions with the development industry and municipal planners in particular pointed to the need for a set of guidelines that could be of use to transport and land-use planners.

The Centre for Sustainable Transportation, then based in the Toronto region, undertook development of a set of *Child- and Youth-Friendly Land-Use and Transport Planning Guidelines for Ontario*, with the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. A *Guidelines* document was published in 2005 and work since then in Ontario has been directed towards their dissemination among municipalities and other interested parties.

Development of *Guidelines* documents for each province

Soon after the Ontario *Guidelines* document was produced, draft versions were produced for British Columbia and Nova Scotia, to see if there was merit in adapting the Ontario document for use in other provinces.

The Public Health Agency of Canada became convinced that there could be merit in developing such a document for each Canadian province, in particular because it could contribute to more involvement by young people in active transport, particularly walking and cycling.

Development of *Guidelines* documents for each of the other provinces occurred across the period November 2007 to March 2010. The development of each version comprised elaboration of a province-specific draft reflecting particular circumstances, legislation, language, and practice. The draft was circulated within the province for review. It was then revised, re-circulated, and revised again. Workshops on the *Guidelines* documents were held in every province, as well as webinars and several small-group discussions.

Up to five drafts of each provincial *Guidelines* document were developed, before the final versions that are now posted at the project's Web site. Across Canada, over a thousand people have contributed to development of the *Guidelines* documents.

Dissemination of the *Guidelines* documents

During the latter part of this *Guidelines* development period, the Public Health Agency of Canada also supported initial efforts towards *dissemination* of the respective *Guidelines* documents in three provinces: British Columbia, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. Dissemination is the next step beyond development. Dissemination is concerned with securing adoption or recognition by municipal councils, which would then require their planning staff and consultants to apply the guidelines. Dissemination requires intensive work with individual councils, and it may not bear fruit for several years.

Dissemination of the *Guidelines* is continuing under the auspices of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer's CLASP initiative, which is also supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This work is being led by Green Communities Canada (see <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltravel.asp>).

A single set of guidelines for Canada

The main goal of the *Guidelines* exercise was to produce a set of guidelines for each province that would be of value in the province in question. A secondary goal was to achieve a single set of guidelines for Canada, in the belief that such a set would have more weight, within Canada and outside, than several different sets, and would be more likely to achieve national and international exposure.

The secondary goal was achieved. There is now a single set of Canadian guidelines. However, the guidelines for Quebec, besides being the only version produced in French, are structured a little differently. For Quebec, the 19 guidelines are ordered according to three overarching principles. For the other provinces, they are ordered chiefly according to the purpose of the travel to which they refer. The result is there are differences in the sequencing of the guidelines and in the ways they are presented.

The initial drafts for most provinces were based on the original set of 27 guidelines. During the process of development of the 10 provincial guidelines documents, consolidation or removal of particular guidelines led first to an intermediate set of 21 guidelines and finally to a set of 19 guidelines.

Earlier versions of the *Guidelines* documents with 21 or even 27 guidelines may still be in circulation. However, only the 19 guidelines set out here, and in the provincial documents posted at the project's Web site, should be regarded as the Canadian guidelines.

Consideration of rural and remote communities

Quite early in the development process we soon understood that the guidelines, as they were evolving, would have more application in urban and suburban communities and in Canada's smaller cities and towns. They might also be of value to planners working in rural and, to a lesser extent, northern and other remote communities. However, the concerns in these other communities were sufficiently different to warrant separate treatment.

Accordingly, the Public Health Agency of Canada supported development of a single *Guidelines* document, in English and French, for rural communities across Canada, that attempts to provide better accommodation of rural concerns. It is available at the project's Web site. Even this document may not adequately serve remote communities, whether in the provinces or the territories, which may have to wait for a later process.

Sources of information

Each of the ten provincial *Guidelines* documents contains a review of the relevant academic and government literature and is illustrated with numerous province-specific and other examples of relevant practice. Thorough sourcing is provided in more than 100 reference notes. Each provincial document also contains discussion of the challenges of dissemination and implementation of the guidelines. The rural document also contains similar features. Also at the project's Web site, there is a formal review of the relevant literature. To keep the present document as brief as possible, these matters are not repeated here and no sources of information are provided.

What follows are the 19 guidelines with a brief elaboration of each one. Much more complete elaborations are provided in the ten provincial documents, each about 80 pages in length, that are available at www.kidsonthemove.ca or www.jeunesenmouvement.ca.

The 19 guidelines

Putting children and youth first

These three guidelines may be considered to be the most important of the 19 guidelines.

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.

This is the framework guideline that sets the scene for the guidelines to follow. Putting children and youth first means that their needs are considered at every stage of transport and land use planning processes. Transport systems are designed so that their needs can be met. Land uses are developed to support such transport systems.

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.

Implementation of this guideline may be an essential requirement for application of all or most of the other guidelines. How this guideline is implemented will depend on how the municipality is structured, and also on its size.

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.

In the case of youth—i.e., about 12 years and older—this guideline might literally involve establishing a youth advisory committee or other such group, charged with review-

ing and bringing forward plans and proposals. Some municipalities already have such a group, but its mandate may need to be expanded.

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.

Travel by foot should be the priority for children and youth who can walk. Walking can provide the maximum of exercise for the minimum financial outlay. Walkers encounter their surroundings and other people at a pace that facilitates beneficial contact. Walkers inhabit sidewalks and other paths in ways that add to the safety of other walkers. Similar considerations apply to children and youth who use wheelchairs.

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.

Availability of a route does not ensure its suitability for children. How suitable it is can be determined by walking or wheeling a child through the route or walking with a person who is wheeling a stroller. Are there ‘eyes’ on the route; i.e., it is well travelled, or does it pass through places where people are watching who walks or wheels by?

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

The obvious reasons to keep young people away from road traffic and other motorized vehicles is to avoid injury. Less obvious reasons are to reduce their exposure to noise, which may be harmful and to the high levels of pollution that may exist near traffic.

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

It’s hard to push a stroller or wheelchair through uncleared snow or on an icy sidewalk, or to expect a toddler or even a slightly older child to walk there. Thus, car journeys may be made in winter on days when walking would be possible if paths were cleared.

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

These guidelines are meant to complement rather than in any way replace bicycle safety programs for children and youth.

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

In transport and land use planning, bicycle use should have a priority similar to that for walking and wheelchair use. Indeed, for youth (about 13 years and older), bicycling could well have a higher priority, to ensure as much non-motorized mobility and independence as possible.

Guideline 9. For destinations to be reached by bicycle, provide separate bicycle paths or trails or, if not possible, install bicycle lanes on regular roads.

For adults there is a reasonable debate as to whether to invest in separate paths or trails or for the same investment to provide many more bicycle lanes. When the safety of young people is considered, the arguments for separate paths or trails are much stronger.

Guideline 10. Ensure that bicycle riders are well provided for at intersections and have sufficient priority for forward movement.

Whether riding on bicycle paths, bicycle lanes or roads, intersections and road crossings pose the greatest challenges for bicycle riders. They are where most collisions occur. This is even more true for young people

Guideline 11. At destinations, provide secure, convenient bicycle parking.

The regrettably high incidence of bicycle theft in many communities is a major deterrent to bicycle use, especially by young people. It can be remedied.

Providing for children and youth as transit users

Early transit use, where possible, is to be encouraged for the independence it gives young people and because it may well lead to transit use as adults.

Guideline 12. Ensure that every part of a transit system is safe and welcoming to young people, and affordable.

Youth can be heavy users of transit, and in some communities comprise a significant share of transit users. However, they sometimes may not be as welcome as passengers as adults for fear they will be rowdy, vandalize transit property or do something unsafe.

Guideline 13. Avoid transfers by routing vehicles where children and youth want to and need to go; make transfers easy where necessary.

A challenging feature of transit systems, especially for younger children, is the frequent requirement to transfer between routes and even between modes. Transfers can be avoided by more appropriate routing of vehicles.

Guideline 14. 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.

Among the most challenged users of transit systems are passengers with young children in strollers. These users have particular difficulties when there are stairs or steps and when vehicles are overcrowded.

Providing for journeys to and from school

Providing for journeys to and from school is usually regarded more as a matter for school boards. Municipalities also have an interest, because of the advantages to the community of having less motorized transport and of having children and youth who may sustain practices of active transport into adulthood.

Guideline 15. Help ensure that school policies and practices favour walking, cycling, and other modes of active transport for trips to and from school, and also regular public transport where this is available and appropriate.

More person-kilometres may happen in school buses in Canada than in the vehicles of all of Canada's transit systems, and such travel by bus may have advantage over travel by car. However, school buses present problems. Children may stay in them too long because of the way routes are arranged. Air quality inside school buses may be poor. Some say bullying on school buses can be a worse problem. Time spent in buses is time not spent walking or cycling, or achieving independence by travelling on the regular transit system.

Guideline 16. For younger children, help arrange walking school buses and other means of supervision.

The essential feature of a walking bus is a line of children, even holding a rope if they are under five years, led by and followed by one or more adults with perhaps another one or more adults roving the line. Such arrangements for walkable journeys to and from school, kindergarten, and day care and might be best implemented through those organizations. Municipalities can offer encouragement and even facilitation.

Reducing transport's adverse impacts on children and youth

Children and youth appear to be particularly vulnerable to traffic impacts. Therefore, reducing traffic impacts could have an especially beneficial effect on young people. Similarly, communities designed around the automobile may be less child- and youth-friendly than communities with a low dependence on automobile use.

Guideline 17. Where destinations cannot be reached by foot, bicycle or transit, arrange land uses so that in-car time is reduced.

To the extent that children's travel by car is undesirable—because of poor in-vehicle air quality and opportunities lost to exercise, gain independence, and experience neighbourhoods—land use and transport planners could help ensure that the distances children travel by car are kept as short as possible.

Guideline 18. Post and enforce much lower speed limits, particularly in urban areas.

This may be the most important *Guideline* apart from the first three. Other things being equal, collisions are more likely to occur and are more likely to be severe when speeds are high.

Guideline 19. Do what is possible to reduce amounts of motorized traffic generally and reduce its adverse impacts.

Motorized traffic can be reduced by using vehicles more efficiently (e.g., car-sharing) and by achieving more active transport by all ages. Adverse impacts can be reduced by improving vehicles and, where possible, using electric traction rather than internal combustion engines.

Concluding comment

The development of the Canadian guidelines could have been an important first step towards realization of the vision of Enrique Peñalosa that is set out at the beginning of this document. The next, more challenging step is to secure adoption or recognition of the guidelines by municipalities and other agencies throughout Canada, and then use of the guidelines. Widespread implementation of the guidelines could well help result in successful communities for children that are, as a result, successful communities for everyone.