Active Transport

Definition
Active transport includes non-motorised forms of transport involving physical activity, such as walking and cycling. It also includes public transport to meet longer distance trip needs as public transport trips generally include walking or cycling components as part of the whole journey (Villanueva et al, 2008).

Overview
Active transport provides tangible health benefits by increasing daily physical activity levels and improving social wellbeing. Other benefits such as less cars on the road and a greater sense of community have also been identified (Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 2009).

Planning for active transport requires facilities to ensure trips are convenient and safe. This includes end of trip facilities (particularly for cyclists) so that people can have a shower and get changed if they need to.

Why?
The National Physical Activity Guidelines for adults in Australia recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (including brisk walking) on most days of the week. Active forms of transport can support these physical activity requirements by providing opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily activities such as travelling to work or going to the shop or school.

Walking is the most accessible form of physical activity for many Australians. In 2004-05, walking was the most common form of exercise for those aged 15 years and over, with nearly half (49 per cent) reporting walking as a form of exercise in the previous two weeks (ABS, 2004-05).
Given that in most cities 10 per cent of all car trips are for distances less than one kilometre and 50 per cent are for distances less than 5 kilometres (typically from home), there is considerable scope for these trips to be active transport trips rather than being made by car (Brisbane City Council, 2006).

**How?**
Active transport requires the urban structure to be designed so that walking and cycling trips are convenient, pleasant and safe. In order to make walking and cycling the favoured modes for many people there needs to be:

- high levels of amenity, especially to key destinations such as workplaces, schools and shops
- mixed land uses and densities to support active transport, and

The location of key facilities such as shops and schools, close to homes and on the most convenient path between two major activity centres is key to ensuring a high level of active transport, and will also help ensure the sustainability of commercial activities. To support active transport, the ideal urban structure is higher densities along main transport routes and key activities occurring where two main transport routes intersect.

**Health & Planning Fact**
Australian evidence shows that people who live in neighbourhoods with shops and schools near to their homes are more physically active (Papas et al, 2007).

Australians who walk, cycle or use public transport to get to work have a lower incidence of overweight and obesity than those who drive to work (Wen et al, 2006).

**Encourage**

- Guiding the structure planning process around the needs of active transport at the regional and local level to ensure active transport is the base from which the access and movement strategy is built.
- New growth areas that have a variety of destinations (such as schools and shops) within walking or cycling distance, and high residential densities (such as over 20 dwellings per hectare) to support these.
- A movement network with a highly-interconnected cycling/walking path network and a coordinated network of streets with bike lanes, pedestrian priority at intersections and pedestrian links from the end of cul de sacs.
- Pay special attention to the design of major roads and intersections to ensure active transport paths are safe.
Integrate public transport into the transport planning process to develop a sustainable transport framework that caters to all users.

Support public transport provision through density, mixed land use, building up to front allotment boundaries, providing weather protection, ensuring design minimises distance from public transport stops to building entrances and maximising pedestrian amenity.

Major public transport nodes or interchanges located within activity centres, and locate these activity centres ‘on the way’ to somewhere else (rather than just off the trunk route).

Bicycle storage facilities at stations to enable users to cycle and then connect with public transport.

Public transport stops that:
- link easily and directly with the pedestrian and cycling network
- are located conveniently for the walkable catchment to provide a hub for the surrounding community (with postal boxes, milk bar, etc) based on the passenger service requirements for each public transport route
- are supplemented with safe crossing points to improve accessibility, and their access routes have natural surveillance from surrounding development, and
- have enough space to provide for shelter, seating, signage, information and lighting.
Rule of thumb
Encourage active transport by planning for appropriate (supportive) urban form (densities, mixed land use and key destinations), providing for active transport options within the regional and local transport planning process, and investing in required infrastructure. Plan the pedestrian and cycle paths and then make the roads fit around (and support) the perfect pedestrian environment.

Avoid

- Overpasses that may create additional travel distance and effort.
- Underpasses where visual surveillance will be limited.
- Not properly planning or funding active transport infrastructure within new growth areas.
- Not including active transport considerations in renewal of existing areas.
- Funding or approving major projects before impact on active transport has been assessed.

REFERENCES


Design Principle – Active Transport


