

ACTIVE TRANSPORT FOR CHILDCARE CENTRES:

A CASE STUDY AND RESOURCE FOR COUNCILS



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INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary of and reflection on a project recently undertaken by the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) in partnership with three member Councils. The project is presented as a case study, and accompanied by a series of resources and references that may be of interest to other Councils considering interventions in this area.

The case study project, *Active transport for parents and children at Council preschools and childcare centres*, was funded from the Local Government and Shires Associations' (LGSA) Healthy Local Government Grants Program. The three Sydney Councils involved, namely Waverley, Marrickville and Sutherland Shire, agreed to work with their Council childcare centres on the issue of active transport, as a means of promoting both environmentally sustainable transport and better health in their communities.

This report is aimed at the local government sector, particularly Councils seeking ways to support active transport as a means of promoting positive environmental and health outcomes in their communities. The focus of the case study project was on parents and children who use Council childcare centres and preschools, and the resource will be particularly useful in that context. However, the report is also of wider relevance with respect to the issue of active transport in the local government sector more generally.

This resource highlights some key aspects of the project only. Other more detailed reports were prepared in the course of the project – further information is available from SSROC.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The project was coordinated by the SSROC and the participating councils were Waverley, Sutherland Shire and Marrickville. Research assistance was provided by the Institute for Sustainable Futures and the Centre for Local Government, both at the University of Technology, Sydney. The project steering group included representatives of the partner organisations as well as representatives from Sydney South West Area Health Service and South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service.

AIMS AND RATIONALE

The project sought to explore and understand the reasons for current travel behaviour to and from Council preschools and childcare centres and the barriers to active transport. The Councils aimed to use this research to inform the development of interventions designed to increase the use of active transport. The project also aimed to build or strengthen partnerships between Council staff and childcare centre staff. This partnership approach intended to make use of Council resources to support interventions in the Centres and also to enable local active transport issues to be addressed in plans and strategies at the LGA level.

The project targeted preschool-aged children and their parents. Targeting this population group has the potential to change behaviours and influence attitudes early in a child's life, as well as encouraging and supporting parents to establish active transport habits for themselves and their children. Part of the rationale for the focus on preschool-aged children was the idea that if active transport options were introduced to young children (and their parents), then these forms of transport may be more likely to be continued as the child progresses to school.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The Institute for Sustainable Futures sought to locate examples of existing or previous projects undertaken and resources developed, in Australia or overseas, that focused on the following goals:

- > promoting physical activity to children in preschools/childcare centres
- > promoting physical activity to parents of preschool-aged children
- > developing school-based active transport interventions.

This review did not locate any evidence of previous projects that focused on active transport to and from childcare centres. While primary school-based active transport strategies are becoming more widespread, it seems that the potential for early intervention to promote active transport in preschools/childcare centres has not yet been realised. The value of early intervention and prevention approaches with preschool-aged children is well established in the early childhood and health fields. However, existing active transport strategies overwhelmingly begin in primary school. The project partners remain unaware of any other attempts in Australia to undertake active transport strategies in a preschool or childcare setting: the SSROC project appears to be the first of its kind.

The lack of previous similar projects meant that there were no real precedents on which the SSROC project could draw. However, there were a number of useful reference points, including:

- > active transport projects undertaken in primary school settings, (such as 'walking school bus', and 'walk safely to school day' projects),
- > centre-based physical activity projects for preschool-aged children (such as motor skills development programs), and
- > physical activity programs aimed at parents of preschool-aged children (such as 'pram walking' groups).

This material provided a useful context for the project., Some of the lessons learned are discussed in the **Lessons from the Literature** section. Many resources located as part of the review are referenced in the **Useful Resources** section.

WHAT IS ACTIVE TRANSPORT?

Active transport is any physical activity undertaken as a means of transport (rather than recreation). It usually refers to walking and cycling, although it can include the use of any non-motorised form of transport. Public transport can also be included as the journey usually involves some physical activity (e.g walking to the bus stop).

In the context of this project, active transport includes:

- parents and children walking,
- parents walking with children in a pram or stroller,
- parents cycling with child seats,
- children cycling/scooting with their parents, and
- parents and children using public transport together

As an alternative to private vehicle use, active transport has significant health, environmental and community benefits.

“*Instituting active transport regimes would have a vast beneficial impact on Australia’s environment, health and transport congestion, particularly in the main cities.*”

Parliament of Australia,
Sustainable Cities, 2005: 5.93

ADDRESSING THE DECLINE IN CHILDRENS' ACTIVITY LEVELS

There is increasing evidence that levels of physical activity being undertaken by Australian children are declining, with associated negative health effects. This has been particularly well documented with regard to primary school aged children, but the importance of ensuring that preschool aged children also undertake sufficient physical activity should not be underestimated. In fact it is an extremely important aspect of child development, and helps to ‘sow the seeds’ for healthy levels of activity later in life.



“*There is overwhelming evidence on the health benefits of physical activity, yet less than half of all adult Australians are sufficiently active for a health benefit. There is also evidence to suggest children are participating less in sport and incidental activity and spending a considerable proportion of their time in sedentary leisure activities. The significant and inequitable impact of physical inactivity on health outcomes requires urgent action.*”

Be Active Australia: A Framework for Health Sector Action for Physical Activity 2005-2010

THE CHALLENGE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR PARENTS

The Public Health Association of Australia (2005) has identified parents (particularly mothers) of young children as one of the population groups which is less likely to undertake sufficient physical activity. Population surveys consistently identify women with children as a group at higher risk of inactivity (Bauman et al 2002). Along with women from some non-English-speaking backgrounds, women with young children are the least likely to be sufficiently active for health benefit (Brown et al. 2000, Armstrong et al. 2000).

Parents with preschool-aged children face a number of barriers to physical activity. The main challenge is to ‘fit it around’ their caring responsibilities. Parents with preschool-aged children are likely to have less time and opportunity to focus on their own fitness, and attendance at organised sport and recreation activities is difficult if no childcare is provided. The extreme difficulty of accessing or arranging affordable, suitable childcare that is compatible with the parent’s physical activity is a major reason why many parents of preschool-age children are not sufficiently active (DLG 2001:87).



photo courtesy of TravelSmart



“*Motor skills are the building blocks of all movement. Children who are physically active from an early age and have positive, enjoyable and successful movement experiences in the early stages of life will continue to engage in and pursue activity on a regular basis.*”

Landy and Burridge 2002

LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE AND PREVIOUS PROJECTS

It is clear from the relevant literature and from previous projects in this field, that changing travel behaviour is challenging, and that individual 'active transport' projects at the community level can be difficult to establish and sustain. Individual projects need ongoing organisational support, coordination and resources if they are to be sustainable.

Information and awareness raising is only the first step

In terms of strategies, findings from previous projects suggest that raising awareness, or providing information is a useful first step. However it is usually not enough to help most people overcome the many different barriers to using active transport. This is not to deny the importance of awareness raising as a component of active transport strategies, merely to point out that it is insufficient as an approach on its own.

In the context of this project, raising parents' awareness of the issues surrounding children and transportation, parents' own physical activity levels, the negative consequences of the increasing trend towards car-based travel for children, and the potential health, environmental and social benefits of active transport were all important goals. However, as many previous projects have discovered – and indeed, as the broader field of behaviour change or 'social marketing' literature makes clear, providing information is not enough. For many people there is a significant gap between attitude and action, meaning that raised awareness does not always translate into changed behaviour – particularly in the long term.

Parents face multiple barriers to adopting active transport

The reason that information and awareness-raising strategies alone are inadequate is that they only help to overcome one of the many interlinked barriers to adopting active transport that people face. Consultations undertaken by O'Brien and Gilbert, (2003) in Canada identified a wide range of barriers to children's active transport to school. These included lack of appropriate infrastructure for active transport (bike paths, footpaths), provision of infrastructure that encourages car use ('Kiss and ride' or drop-off zones), parents' fears (both of traffic, and generally of public spaces and strangers), lack of awareness of the health impacts of driving, and schools not seeing transport issues as their responsibility.

All these barriers and more apply in Australia, and in relation to travel to childcare. However, the survey research undertaken with parents as part of this project suggests another, arguably more important factor, namely the relationship between parents' travel to childcare with their children and their own subsequent journey to work. In a city like Sydney, where there are 1.4 vehicles per household, and 58 percent of workers travel to work by car, parents' decisions about how to travel to childcare with their children are taken not in isolation, but in the context of an already highly car-dependent lifestyle. The survey results – discussed below – help to explain why it is so difficult for many parents to adopt active transport in the particular context of travel to childcare, even when many of them would like to be able to do so.

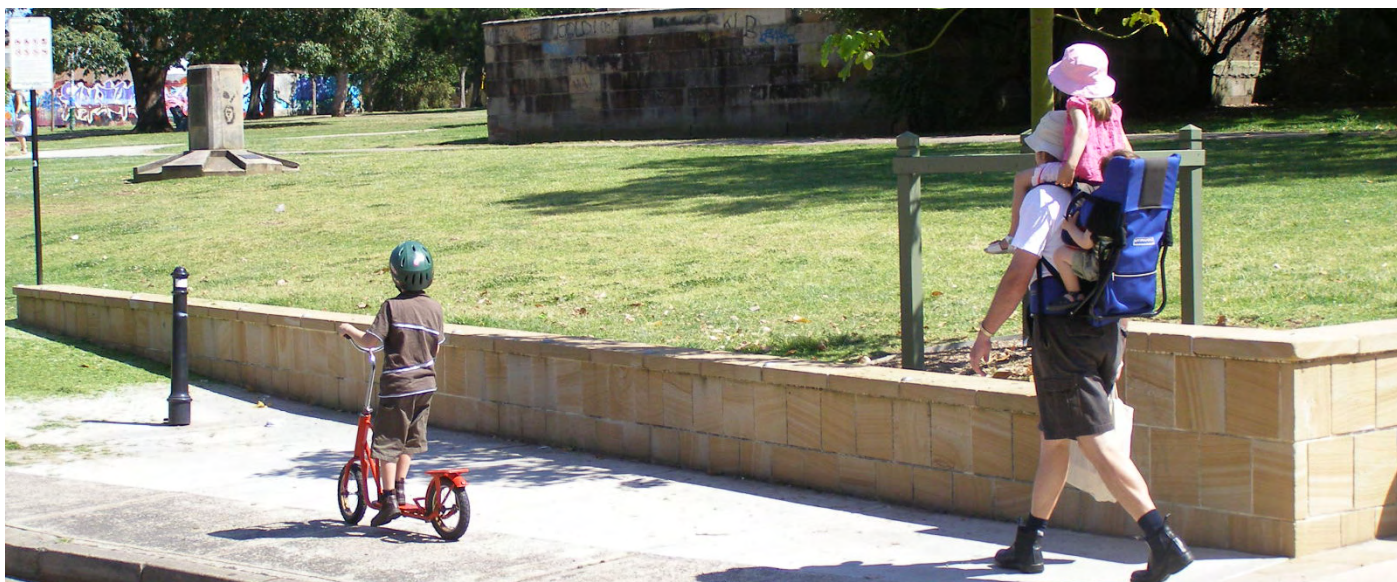
A full appreciation of the multiple barriers to adopting active transport that are faced by parents should make it clear that increasing the uptake of active transport modes requires a multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral approach. Physical, structural and workforce-related barriers all need to be addressed, as much if not more than attitudinal barriers. Clearly an individual Council will not be able to, and should not be expected to remove all these barriers for residents in their community. However, Councils do have an important role to play. See 'A role for Councils' section.



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FINDINGS FROM THE PARENT SURVEY



In the survey 84% of parents said they usually drive to childcare. Most did so as part of their journey to work.



A significant proportion of parents said they were willing to consider active transport. Many like the *idea* but in practice it's a challenge - especially for busy working parents.

A survey was undertaken with parents at each of the four childcare centres that participated in the SSROC project. It asked about current travel behaviour and the reasons for this behaviour, as well as parents' physical activity levels and their attitudes towards active transport.

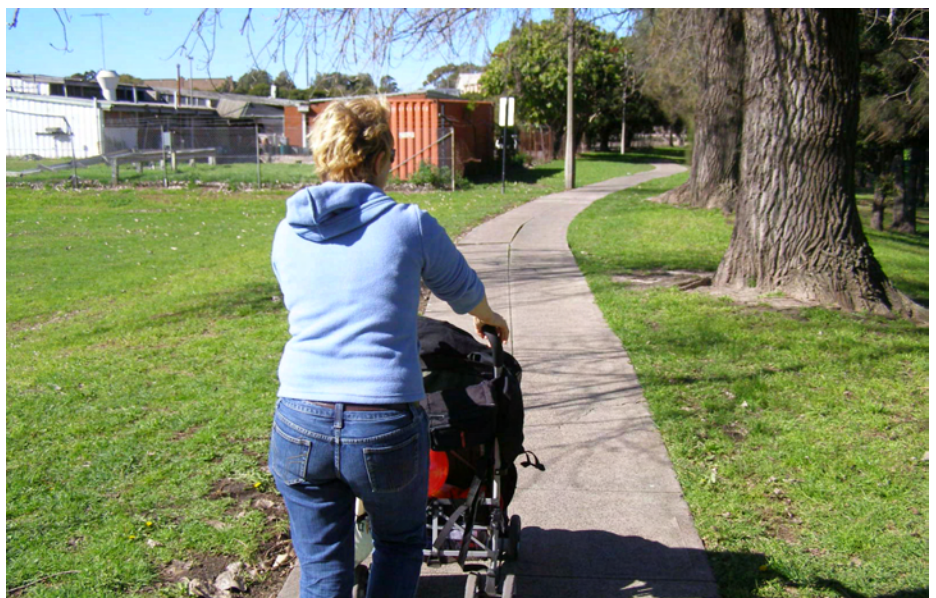
The survey showed high levels of car dependence at all the centres, with 84 percent of the respondents listing driving as their usual mode of travel to childcare. Only 8 percent usually walked, while another 7 percent used a variety of modes on different days (typically these answers were 'sometimes drive, sometimes walk'). One person listed public transport (bus) as their usual mode of travel. Only one third of the parents who responded were undertaking the level of physical activity recommended by NSW Health (30 minutes on most days of the week).

Of the parents who drove their children to the childcare centres in the study, most (68 percent) did so as part of their journey to work. Of these parents, most drove all the way to work, although a small number drove to public transport after dropping their child at the centre, and parked the car before taking a train to work. Many of those who were not continuing to work drove somewhere else after dropping their child at the centre. This might be an older child's school, or to the shops or other activities.

The results show that while reliance on cars is high, for most parents, travel to childcare is not a self-contained journey for which they can choose a particular mode of travel. Rather it is one part of a longer, multi-purpose journey, which must be completed within significant time constraints. The choice of travel mode will be determined by the multiple requirements of that whole journey, not just the part between home and the childcare centre. Time constraints are significant, as like many Sydney parents, the users of these four childcare centres are overwhelmingly from households where both parents are in paid employment, often at workplaces some distance from their homes. These parents use childcare services precisely as a means of helping them deal with the significant time constraints involved in balancing or 'juggling' simultaneous paid work and parenting.

Despite these time constraints, there was evidence that a number of parents who currently drive may at least be willing to consider active transport options. The proportion of respondent drivers who indicated that they would consider walking ranged from 18 – 44 percent in the various centres. A significant proportion of parents like the idea of active transport even if they did not use it.

The results of the parent survey informed the development of strategies at each of the childcare centres. However, the survey also highlighted many factors that are not within the control of individual child care centres, nor indeed councils: namely the geographic spread of Sydney the location of jobs within the city; and the lack of realistic transport alternatives to the car for many people, especially when journeys to work are broken by the need to drop children to child care.



ACTIONS TAKEN BY THREE SYDNEY COUNCILS

Following the research phase, each of the three Councils involved in this project trialled various interventions in partnership with their childcare centres.

A range of strategies were developed and implemented. Examples of the various kinds of strategies implemented are provided below.

Identification and discussion of barriers to active transport

The survey distributed to parents included questions about the kinds of barriers to active transport that parents faced. Parents later received feedback on the survey results, and were invited to be further involved in the project.

Information strategies to communicate the benefits of active transport

- > Centres developed a project newsletter and distributed it to each family. The newsletter described the project, provided information about active transport strategies for parents and children, and made clear that the participating centre and its staff supported the project.
- > Transport Access Guides, or 'TAGs' were developed for three of the childcare centres and distributed to parents.
- > An information kit was compiled and distributed to parents at both Bradman Road and Moore Street childcare centres in Sutherland Shire. The kits included the TAGs, bus timetables/routes for each centre, cycling information and invitations to parents to participate in a cycling course.
- > A seminar about health, diet and active transport was held for the parents of Bradman Road and Moore Street childcare centres and Globe Preschool in Marrickville.
- > An exercise and nutrition information session was held for parents at Bronte childcare centre in Waverley.

How to get to Bronte Child Care Centre

Bronte Child Care Centre is easy to get to by walking, cycling or public transport. Active travel contributes to the daily physical activity requirements needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The Heart Foundation recommends 30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children each day. Waverley Council and Bronte Child Care Centre support active travel to improve local air quality and reduce traffic congestion around the centre.

Sydney Buses run regularly along Macpherson, Arden and Boundary Streets. (See the map above for bus stop locations).

Macpherson Street Bus Route (generally operates every 10-20 mins)
378 Bronte to Railway Square via Waverley, Bondi Junction, Paddington and Darlinghurst

Arden/Boundary Sts Bus Route (generally operates every 10-20 mins)
360 Clovelly to Bondi Junction via Clovelly

The Bronte Child Care Centre is a pleasant 1 minute walk from the closest bus stop located on Macpherson Street.

Transport Infoline 131500
Bus Train Ferry
mobile: 131500.info
www.131500.info

Case study: Transport Access Guides (TAGs)

The Transport Access Guide for Bronte childcare centre (pictured left) was developed by Sydney Buses on behalf of Waverley Council.

Sydney Buses charges from around \$1,300 to design a TAG like this (A4 folded to DL, full colour). Once the design is developed, Councils can then print additional copies of their TAGs as needed.

The TAGs for Bradman Road and Moore Street childcare centres were developed in-house by Sutherland Shire Council, using Council's GIS system. This was a fairly straightforward task, and one that was not resource intensive. Council can now print additional copies of the TAG, and update it at a later date if necessary.

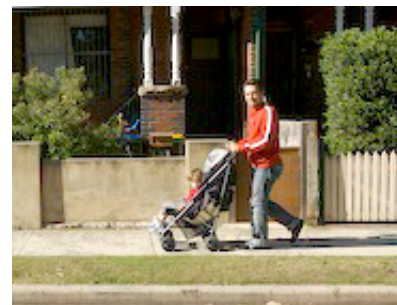
For further information and contact details of organisations that can assist with TAG development, see the **'Tips to help childcare centres'** section.

Supporting and encouraging parents to adopt more active transport strategies with their children

- > Cycling classes for adults were organised at the Bradman Road and Moore Street childcare centres and cycling route maps were distributed
- > All the centres are planning to participate in a '10,000 Steps' pedometer program. This aims to provide encouragement and support to parents and children to increase the amount of walking they do as part of their daily activity. Participating in such programs as part of a group will assist with motivation, and may help develop a culture of active transport in the centres
- > Bicycle education sessions for children and parents are planned for Bronte childcare centre. For children, this will take place during childcare time, for parents it will be outside working hours.

Building partnerships between councils and their preschools/childcare centres

One of the key outcomes of the project has been the successful development of working relationships between centre staff and council project officers with expertise in active transport. The enthusiastic involvement and support of the centre directors and staff was crucial to this project. Centre staff play an important role in establishing active transport as part of the culture of the centre, and supporting and encouraging parents and children to participate. Councils can support centre staff by providing information and resources to assist with specific initiatives, but also by providing a link to relevant longer term Council planning processes, and ensuring that active transport issues for childcare centres generally are raised and addressed in the appropriate forum.



Specific strategies from this project that demonstrate the success of the partnerships, include:

- > Meetings between council and preschool staff to share ideas about promoting active transport
- > On-site meeting between council, childcare centre director and parent representatives to discuss bicycle and car parking at Globe Preschool
- > Talks and information sessions organised by the Councils and held at the centres. These included a 'Health, diet and active transport' seminar for parents at Bradman Road and Moore Street childcare centres and Globe preschool, and a 'Nutrition and exercise' information session at Bronte Childcare Centre

Collaborations between Council and centre staff to promote the 'walking days' at Bronte and Globe.

Opportunities for parents and their children to walk to preschool/childcare with others

Successful 'Walk to childcare days' were organised at Bronte Child Care Centre and Globe preschool. These were pre-arranged days where parents walked to childcare with their children, meeting up with other parents on the way. The Councils and centres actively supported these events, with advertising prior to the day.



Parents, staff and children walking to Globe preschool on 'walk to Globe day'



Globe parents, staff and children stop in a local park on their way to preschool.

Case study: Walk to childcare days

Marrickville Council and its 'Globe' preschool organised a 'walk to child care day' to coincide with the 'National Walk Safely to School Day' that the neighbouring primary school was participating in. Walk Safely to School Day is organised annually by the Pedestrian Council, but this is the first known instance of a preschool being involved in the event.

The day was a great success, with 6 staff, 7 parents and 11 children taking part. Positive feedback from parents means that Marrickville Council's support for the annual event is likely to be continued. Council will also consider expanding the promotion of the 2008 event to the other Council sponsored childcare centres in the area.

Bronte Childcare Centre also organised a 'walking day', with the centre director being actively involved in promoting the day, and Waverley Council's sustainable transport officer attending. Organisers were surprised to see as many as 14 families participating, because the survey results had shown 14 parents were willing to 'consider' walking.

The success of the activity has prompted the centre's Director to continue the 'walking days', holding one every second month. The participation rate may increase as the regular 'walking day' becomes part of the centre's culture and current participants encourage others to attend. Over time, walking may slowly become a more regular activity.

Integrating the issue of active transport for childcare centres into existing Council planning processes

One of the objectives of the project was to identify opportunities to integrate the active transport needs of children and parents into existing Council planning processes.

Marrickville Council made particularly good progress in this area, but further progress and input into future council planning processes within all three councils is likely to occur as a result of this project. For example, at Sutherland Shire Council, the Triple Bottom Line Management Plan 2006 – 2009 includes the statement: “walking and cycling has links to increasing transport options” and one of the key achievements is: “complete strategic linking (through footpath construction) of walking destinations”. The implementation of this plan will be an opportunity to improve the infrastructure for walking to childcare centres. For more on integrating this issue into Council planning see ‘**A role for councils**’ below.

Case study: Planning for active transport to childcare at Marrickville Council

Some of the planning related actions being undertaken at Marrickville Council include:

- The Marrickville Draft Integrated Transport Plan has included a recommendation on active transport to schools and childcare centres
- The Marrickville State of the Environment Report is considering an indicator that would measure the number of people participating in the annual ‘Walk Safely to School Day’.
- During the project Council staff and parent representatives met to discuss traffic and management issues relevant to both Globe and the co-located primary school. These issues were subsequently written up and submitted to council, and were considered by Council’s Traffic Committee.
- The Sydney South West Area Health Service TravelSmart Co-ordinator and the Globe Preschool Director gave a presentation on the childcare project at a meeting of Marrickville Council’s Transport Committee.
- The Transport Planner from Marrickville Council is involved in the transport planning for a new preschool planned for co-location at Marrickville West Primary School, and will use this as an opportunity to discuss active transport issues in relation to that site.

A ROLE FOR COUNCILS

Active transport strategies for children and parents using childcare centres obviously require the support of the centres themselves. However, most such centres will not be in a position to undertake the planning and coordination that such strategies require if they are to be successful and sustainable. This is potentially resource intensive, and may be difficult for small childcare centres with only a few staff and little funding other than that provided for direct care of children. There is therefore an important role for Councils to play in supporting such projects in Council childcare centres.

INCREASING ACTIVE TRANSPORT TO CHILDCARE: THINGS COUNCILS CAN DO

- > Consider the facilitation of active transport when planning and siting childcare centres. This means considering footpath access and suitability of paths for parents and children to walk and cycle, topography (especially hills), safe and convenient crossings, storage facilities for bikes and prams at childcare centres, proximity to residential and commercial areas, and links to public transport
- > Plan for the needs of parents who will be arriving with their children and then continuing to work – the siting of centres should aim to facilitate the use of active transport, both to the centre, and for parents’ ongoing journeys to work
- > Build partnerships between Council transport planners and childcare centres
- > Create a culture that encourages and supports active transport – both in the LGA generally, but also specifically in Council childcare centres
- > Support childcare centre directors and staff and help them to promote and encourage active transport
- > Provide not just information and advice, but opportunities for parents to try active transport in a group with other parents and children
- > Advocate and lobby on behalf of the community, and collaborate with other organisations and levels of government on the issue of active transport
- > Model good active transport practices as an organisation.

PLANNING FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORT

As a place manager, local government has a unique set of responsibilities and opportunities to encourage active transport, particularly for children. Section 8 of the 1993 *NSW Local Government Act*, gives local government the specific responsibility to “promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children”.

Councils can also encourage the increased use of active transport more generally, by considering the issue in all the relevant planning activities they undertake. Here are some examples:

Planning for active transport infrastructure

Councils have an important role to play in the provision of active transport infrastructure, such as footpaths and bicycle tracks. Particular attention should be paid to linking these routes to major ‘destinations’ such as shops, schools and childcare centres.

Long term strategic planning

Many councils have, or are developing, long term strategic plans for their LGAs. ‘Active transport’ strategies can be incorporated as goals or objectives in these plans.

Land-use planning

In their Local Environment Plans – or land-use “zoning” maps – local councils make critical decisions about where various activities occur. When reviewing their LEP, a council could adopt an explicit objective to “encourage and create opportunities for children and adults to share active transport together”. Measures could include:

- > encouraging the siting of childcare facilities near other activity ‘hubs’, such as schools, shops or parks
- > encouraging the development of active leisure “corridors” between transport and /or shopping nodes and residential areas. For example, placing a park with walkways and bicycle tracks between houses and other activity hubs
- > providing bicycle storage at train/bus stations, shopping centres and other destinations
- > encouraging property developers to address ‘walkability’ and ‘bikeability’.

Social or community planning

Councils are required to prepare a social plan every five years. As the social plan is a broad community plan not just a council action plan, its strategies can support those of other agencies, such as NSW Health. Increasing rates of obesity and the need for Australians to become more active in their everyday lives are relevant issues to consider as part of the social planning process.

Planning and managing community leisure opportunities

Councils can encourage community recreation with well designed and maintained sporting and recreation facilities, and public space. Councils should seek to provide a wide variety of active leisure opportunities for people of all ages. This includes:

- > building and maintaining a wide range of community facilities, and taking steps to ensure that they are available at low or no cost
- > balancing the provision of areas for gentler transport activities (walking, scooting, cycling), and facilities for competitive sports
- > designing and maintaining attractive and interesting walking and cycling tracks that both encourage recreational activity and connect with key local ‘destinations’
- > encouraging inter-generational activities and multi-use community spaces – for example, by providing walking and cycling tracks near other sporting facilities, or siting a cafe on the edge of a park where children can play.

Councils as model organisations

Councils can lead by example. Some of the ways Councils can ‘model’ the benefits of active transport include:

- design and build council work facilities that are close to active leisure areas and located on walking corridors
- produce a TAG for Council buildings and other key sites in the LGA
- join with other councils in regional initiatives such as ‘Mayors on Bikes’ and ‘Walk Safely to School Day’, or ‘Walk to Work Day’.
- provide pedometers to staff to encourage more walking
- develop a staff salary package based on an alternative to a packaged vehicle (this could include annual public transport passes, or a bicycle and related equipment and maintenance)
- provide suitable bicycle storage and end-of-trip facilities for staff who cycle to work
- provide Council-branded bicycle clothing to staff (one NSW Government Department does this)
- provide Council bicycles as a means of transport between worksites
- support active transport and recreational experiences for staff. This could include staff sports clubs, gym facilities, membership at council leisure facilities, or support for staff teams to participate in sporting, charity and active community events

TIPS TO HELP CHILDCARE CENTRES ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORT

Provide Active Transport information

- > Have copies of local public transport information and timetables available at your childcare centre
- > Produce a Transport Access Guide or 'TAG' for your centre. The TAG should include public transport route maps and timetable information, recommended walking and cycling routes and available bicycle parking. The TAG can be used to promote the centre and used at orientation, open days etc.

Provide 'end of trip' facilities

- > Provide a secure space for parents to leave a pram or stroller during the day to enable them to walk to the centre and then continue to work by public transport
- > Consider installing bicycle racks at the centre, for parents, staff and children to use.

Create an Active Transport culture

- > **Take part in nationwide events like 'Walk to school day' and 'Ride 2 Work' day.** These events are a fun way to introduce the concept of active transport. By participating in such events, a childcare centre can provide parents and staff with an opportunity to experience walking or cycling to their centre with a group of people. For more information see the Pedestrian Council website: www.walk.com.au. For ride to work event details, see the Bicycle NSW website: www.bicyclensw.org.au/
- > **Plan 'active transport' excursions with children and parents.** Examples might include a walk to the local library, or a local park, or a trip on public transport.
- > **Host a 'bike day' at the centre or at a local park.** Children could bring their bikes and parents could also attend. Council staff such as Environment and Road Safety Officers might like to join in on the fun. Cycling Coaches could teach the children and also the parents cycling skills.
- > **Consider developing a Travel Plan for the centre.** If resources allow, the development of a travel plan for the centre can be an effective and strategic approach. The process involves gathering data on existing travel behaviour and developing tailored strategies, in collaboration with the staff and parents, that aim to promote a change in that behaviour in favour of active transport. For more information and helpful resources, including templates and examples, see the education section of the TravelSmart website: www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au

Contacts for assistance with TAG development:

Roads & Traffic Authority
(02) 9218 6865
Contact: Rebecca Mason

Sydney Buses
(02) 9245 5604
Contact: Sonny Cabalag

SUCCESSES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

This case study contains some encouraging success stories. While the project was a short term and exploratory one, it nevertheless succeeded in demonstrating some of the strategies that can be undertaken in partnership between Councils and their childcare centres to encourage, support and enable parents to participate in active transport with their preschool-aged children. The project partners hope that this small project inspires other Councils to consider opportunities to work with their childcare centres on the issue of active transport.

However, while the project showed the kinds of projects that can be successful, and for which many parents demonstrate enthusiasm, it also demonstrated some of the significant barriers that parents face when attempting to use active transport. As the survey showed, for most parents the journey to childcare is undertaken as part of their own journey to work and within significant time constraints. For many this means that while they like the idea of walking, driving is the only method of travel that seems practical.

Creating the kinds of cities that will enable families to make more healthy and sustainable travel choices for themselves and their children is not something that local Councils can achieve alone. It is a challenge that requires the involvement of all levels of government, and that demands multi-dimensional strategies to be implemented by a range of organisations. However, as this case study demonstrates, there are important contributions that Councils can make, both by initiating specific projects at the community level, and by integrating active transport considerations into land use, transport, infrastructure and community planning processes.



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O'Brien, Catherine and Richard Gilbert, (2003) *Kids on the move in Halton and Peel*, Centre for Sustainable Transport, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canada.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

Guidance on planning and infrastructure provision

Several publications have been produced to assist Councils to plan roads, public spaces, shopping centres, footpaths, parks and other public spaces with the needs of children and physical activity in mind. These include:

- > Premier's Council for Active Living NSW (2007) Designing Places for Active Living, www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/guidelines/index
- > NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and Road Traffic Authority, (2004) *Planning Guidelines for walking and cycling*
- > NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and the NSW Play Alliance (1999) *Child-friendly environments*
- > Heart Foundation (2004) *Healthy by Design: a planners' guide to environments for Active Living*.
- > Department of Local Government (2001) NSW Health Department, NSW Sport and Recreation, National Heart Foundation of Australia (NSW Division), *Creating Active Communities: Physical activity guidelines for local councils*.
- > The report of the recent NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment (Report No 8/53, 2006) includes a chapter discussing the role of local government in creating child-friendly environments.

See also Whittington, V (2005), *Public Health in NSW Local Government: Results of Local Government Public Health Survey 2004*, Local Government and Shires Associations.

TravelSmart resources www.travelsmart.gov.au

TravelSmart programs are run by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. They are voluntary, individual 'behaviour change' programs. Not all TravelSmart strategies are 'active transport' (for example carpooling or tele-working are not) but most are. Examples of TravelSmart projects aimed at primary school children are:

- > NSW TravelSmart School Travel Plan Pilot project, currently being run by Sydney South West Area Health Service in partnership with Department of Planning (funded by the Australian Greenhouse Office)
- > TravelSmart Teacher Resource Kit (curriculum resource aimed at primary schools)
- > The (Victorian) Department of Infrastructure's School Travel Planning Program supports the Walking School Bus, and encourages cycling and independent walking to school through events and active transport promotion.

Walking school bus resources

There are a number of resources designed to help people establish a Walking School Bus – these may be useful references when considering whether the model is adaptable to childcare centres:

- > The VicHealth Walking School Bus Guide includes tips on how to get the bus going, and keep it going, and a series of sample forms – for example, to help recruit volunteers, develop a roster and obtain parental consent. See www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
- > TravelSmart Australia also publishes a WSB Guide for Parents and Teachers
- > Another WSB Guide, published by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority in New Zealand includes information on 'networking the school' with a number of different 'bus routes', as well as a sample 'driver roster', questionnaire for contact people and a user and non-user survey. See www.pinnacleresearch.co.nz/wsb
- > ICLEI-A/NZ has developed a Walking School Bus Quantification Tool for local government to quantify the benefits of the Walking School Bus. The tool is an excel-based calculator uses environmental, economic and social indicators. See www.ccp.iclei.org

Walkability and bikeability checklists

Simple checklists may be useful to assess the walkability or bikeability of the areas surrounding childcare centres. Some examples:

- > The Travel Smart Bikeability Toolkit includes checklists and other resource materials. See www.travelsmart.gov.au/bikeability
- > The US federal government's Walkability checklist uses simple questions to rate the walkability of neighbourhoods. It considers quality of footpaths, road crossings, behaviour of drivers, safety and aesthetics of the walking route. Where problem areas are identified, short term solutions for individuals are suggested, as well as long term solutions which require the formation of partnerships with stakeholders such as local councils, police, schools, local media and private business. The checklist is available on the Victorian 'Go For Your Life' website www.goforyourlife.gov.au

Information about cycling with young children

Bicycle Victoria (<http://www.bv.com.au/bikes-and-riding/10594/>) publishes a number of factsheets that may be useful for parents who are thinking about riding to childcare with their children. These include:

- > 'Taking your toddler with you', which has safety tips for transporting young children safely by bicycle, including what age it is safe to do so, and information about helmets and various seats and trailers
- > 'Bike sizes and children's ages', and 'Children's bikes, seats, trailers and tandems'
- > The Bicycle Victoria 'WomensCycling' website also publishes 'Babies on board: a guide to riding with babies and toddlers' (<http://www.womenscycling.com.au/>)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth)

www.healthactive.gov.au

1800 020 103

Information on physical activity and the National Physical Activity Guidelines for adults and children. Can provide brochures and posters suitable for display in childcare centres or giving out to staff and parents.

Health Promotion Service, Sydney South West Area Health Service

www.cs.nsw.gov.au/pophealth/ (click on Health Promotion)

(02) 9515 9055

Cycling factsheets and brochures.

RTA Bicycles & Pedestrian Branch

www.rta.nsw.gov.au

1800 060 607

Sydney and regional maps; water bottles.

Pedestrian Council of Australia

www.walk.com.au

Bicycle NSW

www.bicyclensw.org.au

(02) 9281 4099

Peak cycling organisation that works towards improving conditions for cyclists for fun, fitness and transport. Provides information on Bicycle User Groups, membership, rides, cycling courses, events, maps, coaches, and other organisations.

Cycling Promotion Fund

www.cyclingpromotion.com

(03) 9818 5400

Promotes cycling in Australia by building strategic partnerships and funding and supporting campaigns that promote bicycle use. Also develops resources including information brochures, posters.

Cycling courses

www.sydneycommunitycollege.com.au

(02) 8752 7555

Sydney Community College has courses such as: Adults, Back on Your Bike; Commute by Bike; Sydney by Bike; buying a bike and bike maintenance.

Cycling at Sydney Olympic Park

<http://www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au/>

(02) 9714 7888

Sydney Olympic Park has a range of cycling opportunities, including bicycle rides and courses for children and adults, and bicycle hire.

Sydney-based cycling coaches (courses for children, adults, schools and workplaces)

Jeni Bindon

(02) 9515 9055 (or 9068)

jbindon@email.cs.nsw.gov.au

Tanya Bosch

(02) 9369 1436

0419 217 974

onyabike@ozemail.com.au

Matt Geale

(Campbelltown area)

0412 952626

