

5. General considerations in guideline development

Although some of the 19 guidelines proposed here are directed more to the benefit of some age groups of children and youth than others, most of the guidelines have common characteristics. They seek on the one hand to increase the amount of active transport— notably walking and cycling—engaged in by young people and also the use of public transit, and on the other hand to reduce their travel by car. As well, the guidelines are directed towards reducing the amount of all motorized traffic near children and youth.

The justification for taking these directions is set out above in Section 3. Present transport practices can damage the health of children and youth in one or more of four ways. They can harm the young person while travelling, as in exposure to collision risk or to poor in-vehicle air quality. They can harm the young person when not travelling, as in exposure to traffic noise or to poor ambient air quality. They can harm the young person by reducing opportunities for necessary physical exercise and exploration of the neighbourhood. They can damage the environment and keep children from experiencing the benefits of direct contact with nature.

The particular vulnerabilities of children and youth, noted in Section 3.1, position them as transport’s ‘canaries’, providing stronger indications than adults exhibit as to whether something is wrong. This is not a reason to use them as mine canaries were used, i.e., to give them early exposure to danger. Rather, it is a reason to provide them with greater protection, when they are travelling and when they are not.

Most of the guidelines are not specific to children. 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. There is widespread recognition that transport in particular, as currently practised, is not sustainable. Perhaps the most compelling statement to this effect, because of its source, is in a report by several of the world’s largest automotive and oil companies, including General Motors, Ford, Toyota, DaimlerChrysler, Honda, Nissan, Renault, Volkswagen, Shell, and BP. The statement is this: “... today’s system of mobility is not sustainable. Nor is it likely to become so if present trends continue.”⁷⁴

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. Consideration of how the guidelines can be applied is the concern of Part III of this document. The balance of Part II is concerned with setting out and justifying the 19 guidelines.

As noted in Section 1.3, the guidelines are more for urban and suburban areas than rural and northern areas, but they may well be of value to communities in all parts of Manitoba and Canada.