

4. Identifying the travel needs of children and youth

Children and youth can have different needs from adults because they are smaller, growing, developing and dependent, and generally more vulnerable. They also have different needs among themselves according to age. Table 1 on Page 24 sets out an assessment of their travel needs and requirements at different ages.

Except for the legal requirement concerning driving, the age grouping in Table 1 is approximate. What children and youth are expected to do or would like to do varies according to circumstance. A child in the inner city, in a family that travels much by transit, might begin to use transit without an adult at an earlier age than a comparable child who lives in a suburb.⁷³ There may also be changes over time. The first unsupervised transit use by an inner-city child may occur later today than it did 30 years ago, when transit use was relatively more common and transit may have been perceived as safer.

The needs identified in Table 1 are considered when the guidelines are developed in Part II of this document.

The fundamental considerations in developing the guidelines in Part II are firstly that the needs of children and youth are different from those of adults (although often not so different from senior citizens), and secondly that these different needs deserve as much attention as the needs of adults.

The latter point becomes the first and most important guideline, which sets the scene for the other guidelines and for their implementation.

Table 1. Age groups of children and youth, their competencies and needs in relation to transport, and perspectives

Age and competences	Possible perspectives on transport needs/goals		
	Child's/youth's perspectives	Parent's/caregiver's perspectives	Society's perspectives
Children 0-3 years: Need constant, vigilant supervision. Require carrying or a stroller some or all of the time.	Infants may need to experience the passing show slowly, even interactively. They also need to be transported safely, including without harm from in-car, curbside, and other pollution.	Needs to transport child safely, quickly, conveniently, and without stress to child. Mostly, this means movement by car, and requires convenient parking, lack of congestion, and short distances. There should be ready accessibility where transit is involved, and a good pedestrian environment where walking is required.	Needs the best possible eventual adults, and the least impact on the present environment. Mostly this means transport that (a) meets the child's needs as stated to the left, and (b) minimizes travel by car.
Children 4-7 years: Mobile; need constant supervision. Never out without an adult except perhaps in the immediate vicinity of home.	As for 0-3 years, and there is also an evident need for physical activity.	As for 0-3 years, but there can be a stronger emphasis on the safety of walking and transit situations; children of this age are likely to do unpredictable things.	As for 0-3 years.
Children 8-11 years: Some journeys are made without supervision, usually not including crossing main roads, making complex transit journeys, and bicycling other than on bicycle paths.	As for 4-7 years, but children of this age may need and seek situations that allow limited and manageable independence, e.g., bus trips without transfers.	There is considerable concern as the first independent journeys are made. There is also tension between allowing/praising independence and exposing children to harm or situations they can't deal with.	This is a potentially critical age for setting attitudes to transport. Society's interest could be to encourage a focus on sustainable transport modes, and even foster antipathy to car use.
Youth 12-15 years: Usually most daytime journeys are made without supervision. There are likely night-time restrictions, and bans on being in cars with older teenage drivers.	The young person's preoccupation is often with achieving the maximum of independence that can be achieved without having access to a car.	Tensions concerning independence are stronger. Resentment can grow—both in drivers and driven—about the amount of chauffeuring that this age group may require.	As for 8-11 years. More than 8- to 11-year-olds, there is a need to provide alternatives to car use to avoid extensive chauffeuring or the problems that can result from isolation.
Youth 16-19 years: All journeys are made without supervision (except as may be required while driving).	A major preoccupation, except perhaps in urban areas, is with securing an automobile or access to one, and the licence and other means to drive. However, most people in this age group do not have primary access to a car and rely on securing rides or on travelling by transit, cycling or walking.	Now a predominant concern is for the safety of the young person as a car driver or as a passenger of peer drivers.	When transport alternatives are available and attractive, the progression to car ownership and use is much slower, or altogether avoided.