



Get a Move On!

A Community Workbook to Create
an Active Transportation Plan | 2015

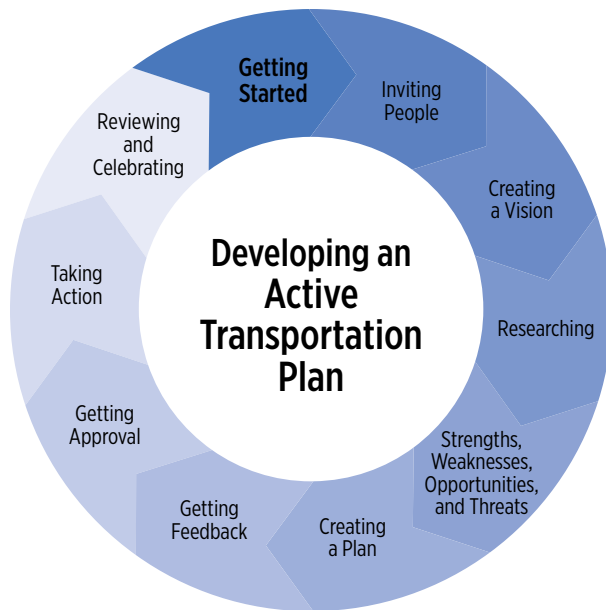


Huron County
Health Unit

Huron County Health Unit
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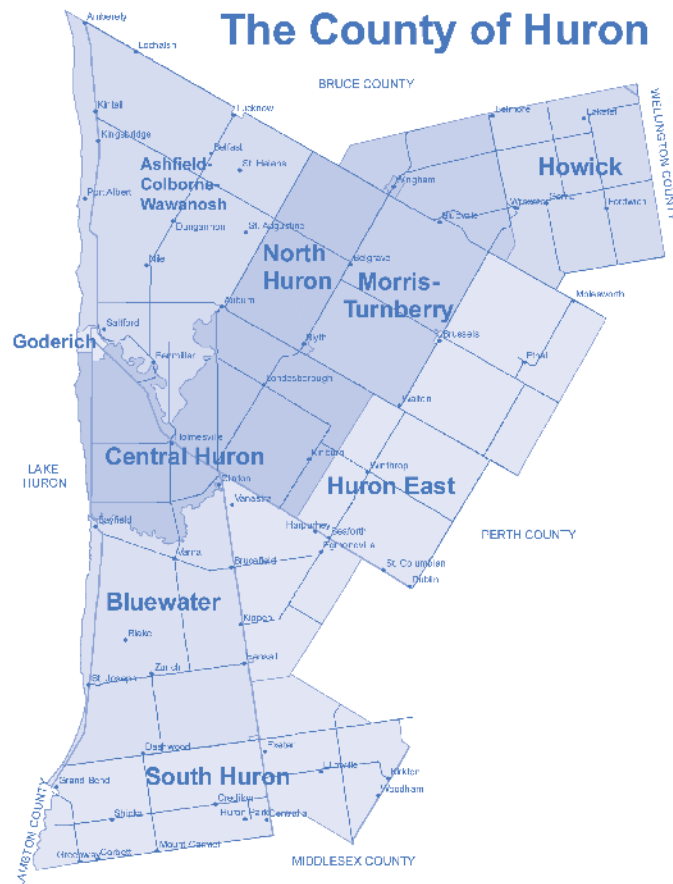
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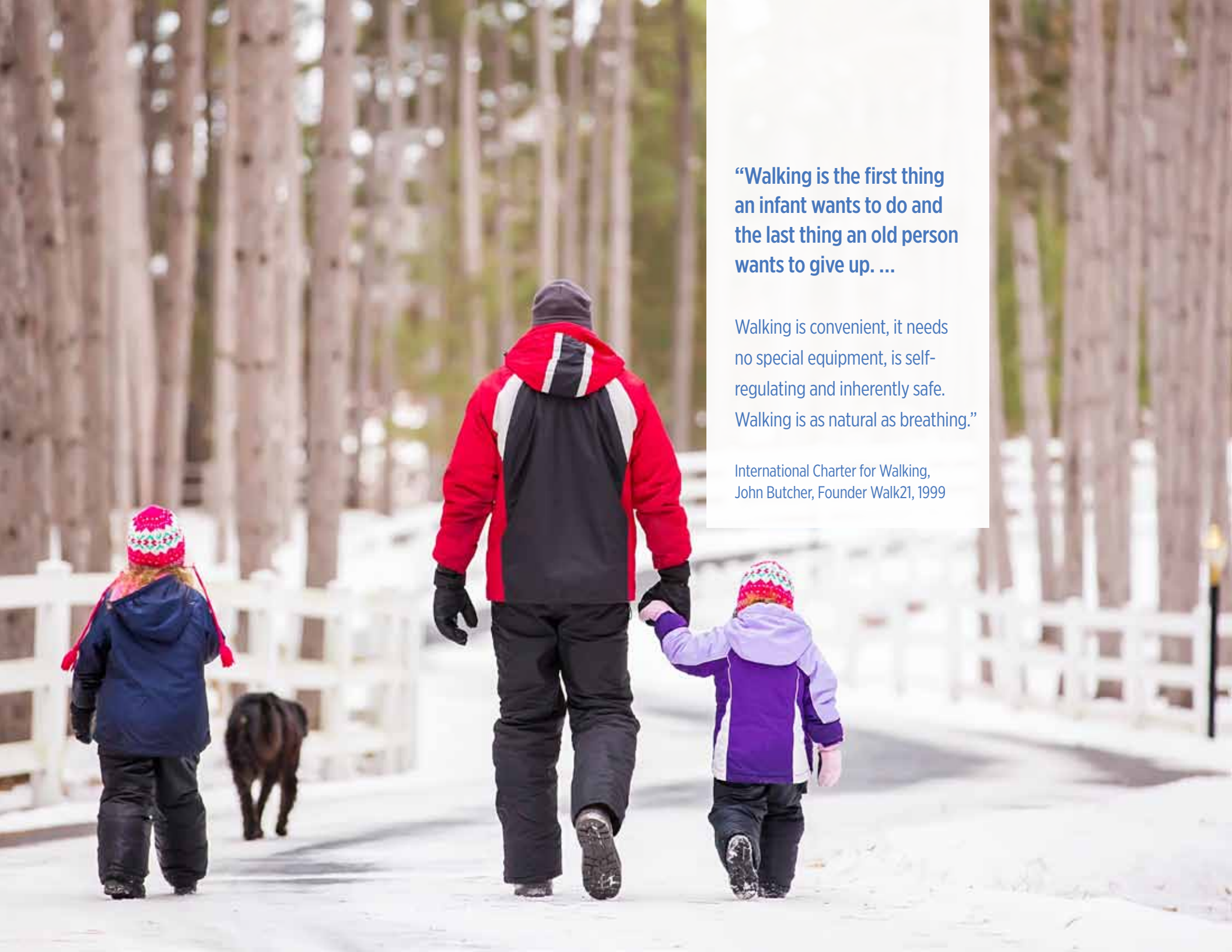




If you live in Huron County and think your community could be more active - this workbook is for you!

Towns with staff and resources can develop active transportation plans, but they can also be created by anyone in the community who is passionate about helping their community be more active in day-to-day life. This workbook will be useful for municipalities working on active transportation, and for community members who may be leading the charge themselves.

Get a Move On! provides the steps you need to take to create your own plan – even if you are starting from square one. Getting your community moving takes work. This workbook will help you start making a real difference in your community.



**“Walking is the first thing
an infant wants to do and
the last thing an old person
wants to give up. ...**

Walking is convenient, it needs
no special equipment, is self-
regulating and inherently safe.
Walking is as natural as breathing.”

International Charter for Walking,
John Butcher, Founder Walk21, 1999

Active transportation means that you use your own body to get from here to there in your daily life.

It means leaving the car at home or parking farther away from your destination and walking, cycling, skiing, or skateboarding. Active transportation helps people:

- improve their health
- connect with others
- save money through lower transportation costs
- protect the environment

An active community also attracts more people to the community.

What is an active transportation plan?

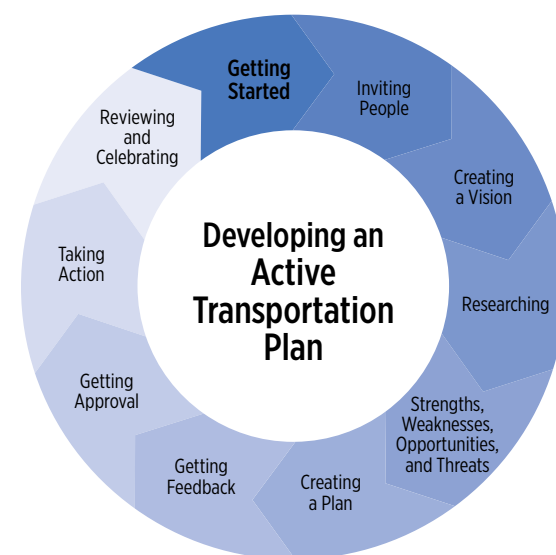
An active transportation plan is something set down on paper that details how the community is going to move forward towards an active community. It looks at where it is today and where it wants to be in the future. It is a blueprint that makes dreams become reality.

It helps people identify actions, prioritize them, and make real improvements. A plan helps a community be strategic, especially when money and volunteer time are in short supply.

Why is an active transportation plan important?

Developing an active transportation plan helps communities encourage residents to become more active in their day-to-day lives. A plan helps people define and prioritize actions so they can make changes to their communities.

It is well known that being more active improves health. Features that encourage active transportation such as sidewalks, trails, cycling paths and bike lanes all make a community more attractive to residents, tourists, and businesses.





Idea Space on Getting Started

Identifying what needs to be done is a key first step.

Step One Getting Started

There are many reasons why you may have decided to encourage active transportation in your community. You may want to improve the health of your family, friends and neighbours. You may want to reduce traffic and vehicle use and dependence on fossil fuels. Or maybe you simply want to see children more active.

You may have also noticed that there aren't many sidewalks or trails, that there are safety issues, or that people in your community really love their cars.

Ask yourself (and perhaps others) these questions:

- Are there other people or groups in your community with a similar interest?
- Has there already been work done in your community to encourage active transportation?
- Have you thought about how you will develop the plan?
- How complex is your community (size, area, issues, etc.) and how complex is the plan likely to be?
- What resources do you have?
- Do you need help?
- Do you need a committee?

Once you have considered these questions you are ready to begin the process!

Step Two Inviting People

It is vital to make sure that you consider all members of your community. You will quickly realize that there are a variety of interests and needs. Children and also the elderly; very active people and also people just starting to use active transportation. People who use wheelchairs, walkers, and/or are sight impaired have very different needs that they alone can identify. You need to ask many community members what they need!

Getting ideas, gathering input, and having real conversations with all affected people right at the beginning of the process is crucial. People will help identify community needs, hopes, and actions. These actions are more likely to happen if people have been involved in developing them in the first place. People need to have a real feeling of ownership for the plan to turn into action. You may also find individuals willing to share the leadership and help complete the plan.

You don't have to have a formal meeting – there are many ways to reach out to your community.

Think about your community and consider:

- Asking your friends and neighbours
- Involving community groups
- Asking the local school
- Reaching out to municipal council
- Placing an invitation in the newspaper, radio, and on social media
- Hosting a meeting

If you decide to host a meeting consider time of day, location, and season. You could even just have a meeting at someone's kitchen table.



Be sure to involve:

- All age groups
- All ranges of abilities
- Those who might not normally participate
- Community groups



Idea Space on Creating a Vision

Step Three

Creating a Vision

If you could imagine your perfect community, what would it look like? This is the start of creating your own vision. Talk to others about what their vision looks like and come up with something that puts all the ideas together.

Think of a vision as a target - it helps keep people focused, and guides actions and decision-making. A vision can be inspirational and lead you to identify certain actions that need to be completed. Some examples of specific actions include:

- Holding community events that encourage active transportation
- Improving signage
- Constructing bike paths or sidewalks

While there are many ways to develop a vision, it needs to be developed from within the community – a vision must be widely shared if it is to change anything. Visions are normally written, but could also be expressed through graphic art or other formats. It does need to be clear and brief.

How to Create a Vision

- Involve community members
- Discuss what you want your community to be like in the future
- Write down key points of agreement
- Prioritize points and select the most important
- Write the vision
- Review and decide if this really is what you want to work towards
- Decide if vision is concrete enough to translate into action
- Share with others and edit as needed

The vision is perhaps the most important part of the entire active transportation plan. It will provide key direction at all points and will help to identify the most important actions.

Active communities encourage and facilitate active living and support community health, vitality, and safety.

They will increase walking and cycling, decrease car dependence and traffic congestion, lead to cleaner air and support tourism. Such environments improve the quality of life for all community members and contribute to vibrant, livable communities.

A Vision from the Active Communities Charter



Closer to home:

- Go on a walking tour of your community
- Get your neighbours involved, bring some food, this checklist, and see what you can identify!



Step Four Researching

Research can happen throughout the process. At some point, you will want to step back and evaluate what your community has in terms of active transportation assets.

Potential areas to research include:

- What does your community look like?
 - Ages?
 - Income?
 - Where do people live?
 - Where do they work?
 - Where do they play?
 - Where do they go to school?
 - How do they move around the community?
- What are the special needs in your community?

Imagine (or ask!) what the walking challenges are for:

- An elderly person
- A young child
- Someone who is visually impaired
- Someone late at night

Checklist

- What do you have and what is missing?
 - Crosswalks and sidewalks
 - Trails
 - Bike paths, lanes, and racks
 - Washroom facilities
 - Supportive community attitudes
 - Finances
 - Know-how
 - Community groups
 - Safety – lighting, crossing guards, lots
 - Aesthetics
 - Signage
 - Physical and geographic barriers – river, etc.
 - Local government perspectives etc.

- Host a meeting
- Bring a map or air photo
- Have people draw:
 - Where they walk
 - How they get to school
 - How they go shopping
 - Where they work
 - Where they don't feel safe
 - Anything else specific to your community

Idea Space on Researching



- What documents might be helpful?
 - Gather all relevant active transportation documents – this may include funding, support, and information. Contact the Huron County Health Unit at 519-482-3416 or 1-877-837-6143 for more information.
- What bylaws and regulations are relevant?
 - Safety is key. Numerous regulations exist to help ensure personal safety (speed limits, crosswalks etc.). Be familiar with these especially in proximity to schools. Contact the local municipality or planning department.

- Do any maps already exist that might be helpful?
 - Roads, trails, specialty maps that include bike-friendly routes (there may already be maps available from the municipality or county that help to identify any number of relevant features). Contact the Huron County Health Unit, Huron County Tourism Office or the Huron County Planning Department.

Depending on the complexity of your community, this research may be very brief or more detailed.

Check out resources at:

- The Huron County Health Unit
- Huron County Planning Department
- Your local municipality

Sometimes people only want to focus on the positive. A SWOT analysis helps to ensure that you consider both sides of an issue. By doing this you are better able to capture opportunities and respond to threats.



A SWOT analysis helps
your community decide
specific actions to take.

Step Five

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

A SWOT analysis helps you understand your community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Internal
- Specific to your community
- Community has some control over it

Strength example:

A centrally located grocery store that is within walking distance for many in the community.

Weakness example:

No crosswalk at a busy intersection

Opportunities and Threats

- External
- Affects many communities
- Community has little control over it

Opportunity example:

When the price of gas increases, people are motivated to drive less.

Threat example:

Reduced government support for active transportation initiatives.

Use your own knowledge, other people's input and any research you can find to make a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.



Idea Space on

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats



Why do a SWOT analysis?

- Helps provide focus – what do you need to improve?
- Helps prepare for opportunities
- Helps deal with threats more effectively



When making your SWOT list, try to answer some of the following questions.

Strengths/Weaknesses questions:

- What assets do you have in your community that encourage active transportation?
- Are people in your community supportive of active transportation?
- What does your community do well or where could you improve?

Opportunities/Threats questions:

- What trends do you see coming in the future?
- How do you see the demographics of your community changing in the future?
- Does local and provincial government policy assist active transportation initiatives?



Step Six

Creating a Plan

Remember – the plan doesn't need to be complex. Larger communities will have more issues and more complexity. For example, a small community may have as few as one or two stop signs compared to a town having 100 or more. The plan itself may be brief and focused, or it may be more detailed and lengthy. The key point is that the plan leads to action.

Also remember – you have already done a lot of the work! In many ways, writing the plan is simply building upon this information, setting priorities, and carefully deciding what needs to be done.

Components of the plan:

- What is our vision?
- What do we have?
- What do we need to do to achieve the vision?
- Who is going to do it?
- How we are going to do it – resources and action?
- How we will measure success – are our actions taking us toward our vision?

ENGAGE your community to:

- Identify actions
- Set priorities
- Bring focus to action



HURON COUNTY ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION: GET A MOVE ON!

How do you set priorities?

You can use:

- A simple vote
- Showing of hands
- “Dotmocracy” where people use sticky dots to identify their priorities.

Setting priorities is key. It’s important to ensure that your priorities are consistent with your resources – how doable is your plan? Think about need, impact, and resources when setting priorities. For example, holding a community walking event would require few resources, but could have a big impact. In comparison, constructing bicycle lanes may be expensive, and may or may not lead to more people being active.

In setting priorities, do the following:

- Consider your vision
- Consider your SWOT analysis
- Identify what you think needs to be added or fixed in your community
- Brainstorm potential solutions or actions
- Decide which actions are most feasible and of most value – remember – you can only do so much
- Identify who will complete these actions
- Identify the resources that are required
- Review the final list of actions
- Look for overlaps or gaps and make changes as appropriate
- Share the draft plan with others and seek approval as required. This might be acceptance by a local service club, or it may be a more formal acceptance by municipal council



Step Seven

Getting Feedback

The key to a successful active transportation plan is making sure everyone participates throughout the whole process. Ask other people for their ideas at every step:

- When you start talking about it
- While you are learning about what you have and what you need
- When you think about actions
- When you decide which actions you want to actually do
- When you share the awesome community plan you developed together!

Don't just gather opinions. Make sure to include these opinions to create a more community-based plan.

This section provides some additional strategies on how to best consult with your community.

Points to consider:

- Know your community and evaluate what would work best. For example, if you are in a small village or hamlet, you might hold a kitchen table meeting. If you are in a larger town, you might meet in a larger public space.
- Good community engagement should result in a plan that people will recognize as coming from them. There should not be surprises at this stage – but the plan provides a tool for refining and finalizing the course of action going forward.



- Community engagement can help to achieve the following:
 - Gathering information
 - Refining direction
 - Ensuring public support for moving forward
- Ensure that the community is fully aware of the plan as it nears completion. Again depending on the complexity of the community, this final consult might follow a relatively simple format or it may be more engaged, time consuming and formal.
- Create an organized activity to get comments from residents and community groups. Here's a sample:

Gathering Information: A walk about in your community!

Steps:

- Get together with a small group of people (friends, neighbours, family)
- Put on your walking shoes, grab a pen and clipboard, plan a route, head out the door - walk or cycle and consider the questions below (if you have children with you be sure to keep a careful watch!)
- Read the questions out loud, discuss your answers, jot down some notes and share with your community leader (at a meeting or pass them along)

As you walk about:

What is it that you value about active transportation in your community?

What are some barriers (missing sidewalks, etc.) to active transportation in your community?

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As you walk about:

What improvements related to active transportation would you like to see in your community (over the next 10-15 years)?

What do you think needs to be done to make this vision happen?

What is one thing you can do to make this vision happen?

Note to facilitator:

- If possible have several groups in your community head out at the same time and in opposite directions!
- Bring people together and share results
- What common themes, shared visions and differences exist?
- This could be the key component in the development of your community's active transportation plan!

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Idea Space on Getting Approval

Tips to influence decision-makers:

- Develop a strategy to achieve the desired outcome
- Understand the capacity of your community - even great ideas have to be affordable
- Understand who makes the decisions
- Present your case clearly and accurately
- Make an emotional connection for people
- Show you have answers, not just a list of complaints

Step Eight

Getting Approval

An active transportation plan may be accepted by a community group or approved by a municipal council. Sometimes community groups or a steering committee will develop the active transportation plan. Once the plan is finalized and reviewed by the community, the board or group who is taking the lead can accept or approve it as a document for future action. It may be taken to municipal council for information and support. Support may come in the form of financial resources, staff time, or just something to keep in mind for future development. For example, if bicycle lanes were something on the list of actions, local government could decide to include this in future road improvements and construction.

What helps your plan get approval?

- It is doable and simple
- There are people or groups designated to take it forward
- Actions will produce tangible results
- It is sustainable over a period of time
- It is flexible to account for unexpected changes in the community
- You have included measures of success to prove your plan is working

If municipal staff develop the active transportation plan, local government will receive it, approve it, and provide support to implement the plans actions.



Idea Space on Taking Action

Step Nine

Taking Action

Preparing to take action with your plan can be both exhilarating and intimidating. It is vital that the first action you tackle has a high chance of succeeding – seeing real results will motivate people who are already involved and encourage those on the sidelines to jump on board.

Having completed the plan:

- Review the priorities and the work plan included within the active transportation plan
- Identify and gather resources (people and dollars)
- Ensure the right people are at the table
- Move on to action
- Ensure that you are meeting appropriate standards and safety criteria

It is important that your first action has a high chance of succeeding. For example, the construction of a new trail is very complex and includes many players. It may be critically important but can take years to implement. However something like creating a walking school bus requires much less oversight and planning.

Remember the whole goal of developing the active transportation plan was to get to this stage where things are happening and you are making a positive change in your community!



Step Ten

Reviewing and Celebrating

Completing an active transportation plan is reason to celebrate! You have gathered the community, gained a broader understanding of who you are and what is important, prioritized, and developed a list of doable actions. Make sure people feel appreciated and valued for their contributions up to this point.

Having a good way to measure success can go a long way toward keeping people motivated over the long haul. If you are fundraising for a new trail, create a large visual in a central location to keep it in people's minds and so they can see what progress is happening. If you are holding community events, make sure to take lots of pictures and promote the success afterward.

Document your successes and be aware of your challenges – this can help build future council support. Remember funders like successes! If you have done something well, and can document that, funders are more likely to be there with you.

Critically consider what you could have done differently and evaluate.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What worked or what didn't work?
- Have people become more active?
- Have attitudes become more positive toward active transportation?
- Are you ready to move on to new actions?
- Have you maximized community involvement?

Celebrate – if the community sees your success and enthusiasm, support will grow.

What other communities have done...



Haliburton County

- Annual Commuter Challenge
- Improved signs
- Cycling festival
- Healthy Active Calendar
- Commissioned art bike racks



Collingwood

- Long Range (5+ years) - Trails
- Mid-Range (3-5 years) - pedestrian enhancement, trail linkages
- Near-Range (up to 3 years) - downtown long term bike park, community walkability audit
- 100 Day Projects (100 days) - downtown parking analysis, annual community AT audit, downtown walking time, wayfinding signage



Village of Minden

- Add walking and biking facilities
- Add sidewalks along main highway
- Upgrade pedestrian crossings
- Review downtown area for visual and physical obstructions on the sidewalks
- Continue to celebrate work that has been done to support active transportation in Minden
- Promote safe walking and cycling for children

Notes



If you have any questions or are looking for more information, please contact the Huron County Health Unit.

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1-877-837-6143

[www.huronhealthunit.ca/
active-transportation](http://www.huronhealthunit.ca/active-transportation)

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