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# Linking Transportation Policy and Public Health

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## Public Transportation and Health

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### 1. What are the most compelling established and/or emerging connections between this area of transportation policy and health and equity issues and outcomes?

Public transportation can help achieve several public health objectives including improved traffic safety, reduced pollution emissions, increased physical activity and fitness, increased community cohesion, improved access to medical services, and increased transport affordability which reduces mental stress. Public transit service tends to be particularly beneficial to physically, economically and socially disadvantaged people.

Public transit has direct impacts when it is used, plus indirect impacts when high quality public transit affects land use development patterns and per capita vehicle ownership. These indirect impacts are often larger than direct impacts, so comprehensive evaluation is needed to understand the full potential health impacts of planning decisions that affect public transit quality and use.

### 2. What are key opportunities to improve public health by changing transport policy in this area?

Policies that improve public transit service quality, encourage shifts from driving to public transit travel, and support transit-oriented develop can provide significant health benefits. Specific examples include:

- Increased and more reliable public transit funding, leading to more and better quality service.
- More comprehensive, lease-cost planning, which allows funds currently dedicated to roads and parking to be used for alternative modes and management strategies whenever they are more cost effective overall.
- Development and application of better planning tools for evaluating transit service quality, transportation affordability, basic mobility/accessibility, equity, and public health impacts.
- Transit priority in traffic (bus lanes and signal control systems).
- Improved transit vehicles (quieter, smoother, more spacious, climate controlled, less polluting, easier to board, accommodates people with disabilities, and amenities such as wireless service), stops and stations (more spacious, climate control, improved security, amenities such as washrooms and refreshments).
- Mobility management strategies that encourage shifts from automobile to public transit, such as efficient road and parking pricing, distance-based vehicle fees, and commute trip reduction programs.
- Convenient, integrated fares using electronic payment systems and targeted discounts.
- Improved transit marketing and user information.
- More integrated transport and land use planning. Policies that encourage transit-oriented development, such as location of jobs, services and affordable housing with convenient access to high-quality transit.
- More efficient parking management, such as efficient sharing, regulation and pricing.
- Improved walking and cycling access to transit stops and stations, plus bike racks on buses and trains, bike parking at stations, and bike rental services.

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