

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR *active travel*

What is active travel?

Active travel (or active transport) includes any type of travel to, from or within the workplace that involves physical activity such as walking, cycling, and incidental activity associated with the use of public transport.

Why support active travel in the workplace?

Physical activity programs have many benefits in the workplace.

The workplace is a great setting to improve people's health. Organisations can promote an active lifestyle by supporting workers to incorporate physical activity into their day.

The benefits of active travel:

- Workers have more opportunities to be physically active
- Better management of transport demands by your business
- Improved corporate image as a sustainable workplace

Regular physical activity reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and prevents unhealthy weight gain¹.



Additional benefits of active travel

In addition to the health benefits, active travel helps to:

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve air quality
- Increase community liveability
- Support environmental sustainability
- Reduce road transport costs
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change².

The Active Travel Guide has more information on how to get started on this.

Physical activity

Physical activity is any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. It includes 'exercise' which is usually a planned, structured and repetitive form of physical activity, primarily performed recreationally to improve fitness levels.

Transport to work (active travel), activities performed at work and other incidental activities (such as activity associated with everyday tasks, like housework) can be important components of overall daily physical activity.

Why be active?

Physical inactivity is linked to poor health and is costly to individuals and the community. Having a physically inactive lifestyle is a major risk factor for many chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. It is also associated with mental ill-health, including depression, stress and anxiety^{1,3}. Currently, only about 55% of adults in NSW are active enough⁵.

Participation in regular physical activity can help to:

- Control body weight, blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Improve strength, flexibility, balance, coordination and reaction times.
- Improve the capacity to cope with stress and anxiety and impart resilience.
- Improve quality of life, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Increase the quality of sleep.
- Reduce the risk of injury and falls.
- Expand social connectivity by allowing more time with friends and family.
- Provide opportunities to meet new people and become more involved with the local community^{1,3}.

People who commute to work via public transport have been shown to walk 13 minutes on average for each trip, so using public transport adds to physical activity levels too¹.



Tips to encourage active travel:

- Involve workers in **walking and cycling events and challenges** such as Ride to Work Day and Walk to Work Day.
- **Offer incentives** for workers to try and continue using active travel, for example, an active travel allowance or time reward.
- **Make Opal cards available** for business trips by public transport.
- Provide **infrastructure that supports active travel**, for example, install bicycle parking and provide showers and lockers.

Review Your Workplace:

- Does your organisation have a workplace health and wellbeing policy or plan? Is there a coordinator or committee overseeing this?
- What existing health initiatives do you implement in your workplace?
- Do you currently provide any information on active travel options or organise any events or activities, e.g. a Ride to Work event?
- Do any existing organisational policies encourage active travel, such as flexible working hours or active travel incentives?
- Do you have facilities to enable active travel to your organisation?

References:

¹Australia Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for adults (18-64 years): Commonwealth Department of Health, 2013 health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#apaadult

²The Co-Benefits for Health of Investing in Active Transportation. NSW Public Health Bulletin, Vol. 21: 5-6(pp.122-127). Giles-Corti et al. (2010).

³Active Living for All: A Framework for Physical Activity in Western Australia 2012–2016. Physical Activity Taskforce (2012). beactive.wa.gov.au/index.php?id=1589

⁴Rissel, C. et al., Physical activity associated with public transport use – a review and modeling of potential benefits. International journal of environmental research and public health, 2012. 9 (7): p. 2454-2478.

⁵Physical activity by sex, trend. Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health. Retrieved from healthstats.nsw.gov.au

How much physical activity is needed per week?

150-300 minutes of moderate physical activity per week **OR** 75-150 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week.

- Be active on most, preferable all days of the week
- Do muscle strengthening exercises on at least 2 days per week
- Physical activity can be accumulated throughout the day – it doesn't have to be completed in one go

