

## ACTIVE STREETS, ACTIVE PEOPLE - JUNIOR:

### An Integrated Community Partnership to Enhance Physical Activity and Active Transportation in Children and Youth

Physical activity is a powerful determinant of health and may well be the most effective ‘medicine’ to counter chronic disease risk, at every age. It is concerning that less than one in ten Canadian children and youth currently meet the physical activity guidelines known to confer health benefits. There is an urgent need to identify innovative and effective strategies that promote physical activity. Although a body of evidence is emerging that links physical activity with the built environment (i.e. urban design elements), we know very little about how children and youth experience their built environment and how this impacts their decisions to be physically active. For instance, a well-designed neighbourhood provides children and youth with opportunities to play safely, be physically active outside, and to choose active forms of transportation, such as walking, cycling and rolling to move about their neighbourhood and to get to school. Thus, creating activity-friendly neighbourhoods may represent one effective means to promote physical activity and health in children and youth.

**Active Streets, Active People - Junior (ASAP-Jr)** will evaluate how different built environments shape children and youth’s physical activity habits, transportation choices, and ultimately their health. For example, what neighbourhood features encourage young people to be physically active or choose active transportation? On the flip side – what are the barriers to active transport? Where possible, we also aim to capitalize on ‘natural experiments’ and investigate whether travel patterns, street usage, physical activity, and physical fitness are enhanced when municipalities invest in positive ‘micro-scale’ changes to the built environment (e.g. sidewalks, benches, lighting).

Our interdisciplinary team, led by Dr. Heather McKay, is based at the University of British Columbia, the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, and the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. We are currently conducting a number of innovative studies and engaging with community partners to make cities ‘healthier’ places to live, learn, and work, for people of all ages.

Partners are key to our success, as they guide our direction and ensure the relevance of our work. We are currently partnering with the City of Vancouver to assess the influence of changes to the built environment along the Comox-Helmcken corridor on activity levels, active transport to school, and health of children and youth. We hope to engage communities, schools, as well as parents and children to further extend our project across diverse regions. Ultimately, our goal is to find solutions to escalating problems that stem from unhealthy lifestyles and to create strategies, including supportive community environments, that enhance physical activity and health at every age.

For more information  
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