Sustainable Transport Coalition WA

Policy: Walking

*Background*

Walking is our most important form of transport and is part of all journeys we make. However, the share of trips made entirely by walking is declining. Walking needs greater priority in urban planning and transport. Some people are unable to walk through a disability and require mobility aids such as wheelchairs or a guide dog; they are included in the terms 'pedestrians' or 'walkers'.

Walking is a sustainable transport and recreational activity and increasing the amount that we walk has many benefits for the community, environment and individuals including:

* Health - Physical inactivity is now our most prevalent health risk factor for heart disease, type two diabetes, bowel and breast cancers and other conditions including obesity. 43% of West Australian’s now do insufficient physical activity to achieve health benefits and 56% of adults are overweight or obese. As little as 30 minutes of moderate activity including walking, on most days can provide health benefits.
* Environment and energy - Walking has minimal impact on the environment. It creates no pollution and shifting trips from car to walking will reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. Walking uses renewable energy and replacing motor vehicle trips would reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
* Equity and Cost Efficiency – Walking is the only transport mode available to almost everybody at any time and without charge. Not all community members own or have access to a motor vehicle and many groups including children, older people and those with disabilities depend on a combination of public transport and walking.
* Community – A walkable community is one that provides a safe environment for pedestrians and stimulates and encourages walking. Community design that incorporates safety, shelter and shade increases activity and interaction between community members and creates natural surveillance of local areas.

Once our most important and common transport mode, walking has been replaced by motor vehicle travel. Car ownership in Perth is the highest of any capital city in the world with 725 cars per thousand inhabitants. Four in every five trips made by Perth residents is by car, about 10% of trips are made entirely by walking.

Everyday in WA's cities and towns people make over 240,000 car trips of less than 1 km (10 minute walk). TravelSmart data indicates that at least 20% of these could be walked. The majority of primary school students (60%) live less than 20 minute walk from school, but most are driven to school. A focus on ensuring local communities are walkable can reduce unnecessary car trips.

*Policy*

For health, environmental and other reasons we should be walking more, and there is plenty of opportunity to do so. Action is needed to provide for and promote walking as a means of travel in urban and rural Western Australia. For metropolitan Perth, the share of passenger trips made by walking should be increased to 12 per cent by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2030.

To enhance walking for transport the Sustainable Transport Coalition advocates action by government, business or the community to:

*(1) Prioritise pedestrians in planning and transport infrastructure*

Walking should be recognised as a legitimate and preferred mode of travel. Walking should be prioritised as a key transport mode in local neighbourhoods and around significant pedestrian trip generators, e.g. schools, shopping areas, and infrastructure provided to accommodate this. Walking should be an integral part of land use and transport planning. Priorities include:

* Increase public investment in infrastructure, including dedicated and multi use paths, shelter, lighting, security cameras (where needed), underpasses and safe and accessible road and rail crossings.
* Work with community and government stakeholders to establish a relevant, whole-of-government agenda to enhance walking and other active transport modes and build cross-sector support for its implementation.
* Undertake regular travel surveys and pedestrian consultation to evaluate progress towards the goal of increased walking and identify issues for attention.
* Retain pedestrian access ways (PAWs) in suburbs. Any proposals to close PAWs should be subject to a transport impact assessment and public review.
* Make the Liveable Neighbourhood community code the standard for residential development and require assessment of pedestrian access and amenity in development applications.
* Develop and implement a Statement of Planning Policy to promote inclusion of pedestrian needs in planning throughout Western Australia.

*(2) Create safe walking environments*

Providing a safe, friendly environment is needed to encourage more walking. This includes an integrated, accessible network of walking paths linking key community facilities and public transport routes. Safety will also be improved through appropriate traffic regulations, speed limits and education. Priorities include:

* Review and enforce design standards and guidelines for roads and pathways to safely accommodate pedestrians, including spatial requirements, route marking, pedestrian sensitive traffic signals and kerb ramps. Guidelines for parallel walk phases should be reviewed.
* Require safety audits by competent professionals and community members to improve safe provision of pedestrian facilities.
* Require that professionals involved in road planning, engineering and traffic management undertake professional development in pedestrian needs and standards.
* Review the Road Traffic Code to more clearly and fairly define the rights of pedestrians and educate all transport users of these, e.g. right of way at traffic lights without pedestrian sequence. The traffic code should be enforced to ensure the legal rights of pedestrians are observed.
* Proactively use the walk hazard reporting system to identify and rectify problem areas and facilities, and underlying design, construction and maintenance issues.
* Introduce 'home zone' areas where traffic speed limits are reduced to 30 to 40 km/hr to provide an environment conducive to walking and bicycling in appropriate locations e.g. higher density residential nodes, neighbourhood shops, playgrounds.
* Introduce ‘driver fault’ legislation to make drivers prove no-fault when in collision with pedestrians and cyclists, as applies in some European countries.

*(3) Better represent pedestrian interests in policy making*

The voice of pedestrians should be better represented in policy-making forums. This is a basic requirement if walking is to have fairer consideration in planning and managing the transport network. Priorities to achieve this:

* Ensure pedestrian interests are represented on the Road Safety Council through the road user representative/s and membership of taskforces.
* Continue and strengthen the Walking WA committee so it can inform State Government policy and programs to promote walking.
* Support pedestrian input to policy debates and advisory bodies by funding peak representative organisations and include them in transport and recreation policy forums.

*(4) Encourage walking in the community*

Community awareness, access to good information and positive encouragement are vital to greater participation in walking. Walking for transport and recreation should be included in the school curriculum and promoted by schools. Community-based promotions and provision of information should be continued. Priorities are:

* Continue the successful Walk There Today promotion and other walking campaigns to encourage walking in the community. Encourage partnerships to promote walking, for example through the Walking Reference Group.
* Make pedestrian safety training more widely available and integrated into school programs, and continue support for the TravelSmart school program and Safe Routes to School initiative.
* Promote walking as an effective way to incorporate healthy physical activity into everyday life through health promotion campaigns and health advice including the “Find 30” campaign.
* Make reliable, quality information on walking, routes and issues available to the public, including local area maps.
* Promote walking as a valuable travel mode through community, school and workplace based demand management including the TravelSmart household program.

The Australian Pedestrian Charter is endorsed as a statement of principles for promoting and enhancing walking. We encourage others to endorse and work to implement the charter.

Adopted 16 July 2003