

INTERIM POLICY: LOW EMISSIONS AND ACTIVE TRANSPORT

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) notes that:

1. Transport was responsible for 14.7% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Australia in 2009 (79 of 537 Mt CO₂-e). The most recent breakdown, for 2008, has of this 51.9% (41.6 Mt CO₂-e) attributed to passenger cars and 34.5 % (27.6 Mt CO₂-e) attributed to business and industry; totaling 86.4% of transport emissions. The other 13.6% (10.9 Mt CO₂-e) was attributed to domestic air travel, shipping and railway (1, p.3 & p.9). The majority of these emissions are from use of petroleum products.
2. The extensive reliance on private motor vehicles built into urban design is a major contributor to the lack of physical activity in Australia (see related PHAA policies on Promoting Health Weight, Physical Activity, Preparing for Peak Oil and Safe Climate).

PHAA recognises:

3. There are two components to reducing emissions from transport. The first is to promote less use of motorised transport. The second is to ensure what motorised transport there is has no or very low per person emissions. Replacement of petroleum-using engines with renewable supplied electric engines would be the most effective way of achieving this where vehicular transport is required (2, Ch20). At the same time, other benefits of using active transport instead of vehicles need to be promoted.
4. Less motorised transport results from promotion of more active and public transport use, disincentives to motor vehicle use, and promotion of other forms of non-physical connectivity.
5. Traffic calming, speed reduction and smoothing traffic flow measures both reduce emissions and enhance safety.
6. Active transport is the mix of walking and cycling, integrated with public transport used for commuting and traveling instead of motorised vehicles.
7. Adopting active transport, particularly in urban areas, confers direct and indirect co-benefits for personal, community and environmental health.

Direct Benefits

8. As little as 30 minutes exercise daily helps to promote weight loss and improve physical fitness (3). Both are prevention strategies for obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes and coronary heart disease. Even moderate exercise, via endorphin release in the brain as well as the positive benefits of feeling fitter, promotes psychological wellbeing.
9. Use of public transport of itself promotes exercise in that people need to get to transport nodes, either by walking or bicycling. Even for people driving to a transport node, the movement about the transport system which involves walking is also of benefit. Thus more utilised public transport is a win-

win for health by increasing physical activity and for the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

10. Reduced use of motor vehicles will result in reduced exposure to particulate, chemical and noise pollution for drivers, residents and workers along traffic corridors, and other users of public spaces.
11. Lower rates of motorised vehicle use contribute to fewer accidents.

Indirect Benefits

12. The benefits that will derive indirectly from an improved public transport system are perhaps more extensive than the direct ones.
13. Such benefits include:
 - a. Improved social cohesion (also known as 'community connectedness'), since people are interacting with others whom they see daily on shared journeys or while walking/biking around their neighbourhoods and building social relationships (rather than each being insulated in their own private car). This also has mental health effects in reducing peoples' sense of insularity;
 - b. Travel times are likely to reduce overall so that there will be more time available to families to enjoy each other's company, promoting better family relationships;
 - c. More egalitarian transport will of itself promote a more equitable society, and current understanding of the social determinants of health shows that the more egalitarian a society the healthier its members are;
 - d. Less tension and concentration needed in public transport travel will also provide improved mental and physical health outcomes for travellers; and
 - e. More use of public transport will result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and so will help to mitigate global warming.
14. Active transport can be encouraged by:
 - a. Provision of shaded cycle parking spaces;
 - b. Easy pick-up/drop-off cycle hire arrangements; and
 - c. Social marketing to change the perception that special gear is needed to cycle.
15. Use of public transport needs to be actively encouraged. Encouragement is provided by public transport being attractive and convenient.
16. To be attractive for use, public transport infrastructure needs adequate physical capacity and robustness, but also the location, coverage and frequency, ease of access, actual personal and infrastructure safety and a positive public perception of that safety.
17. More attractive public transport will be priced so as to be affordable and less costly, or at least no more costly, and as amenable and easy to use as private cars. Use of private vehicles will also need to be actively discouraged by policies that increase inconvenience to driving in built up areas, and prioritise public transport, pedestrian and bicycle over motor vehicle use.
18. Examples of how public transport could be more amenable include:
 - a. Well designed and maintained, graffiti-free and secure busses/trains and stops;
 - b. Integrating public and other active transport modes such as fitting racks to buses so they are able to hold bicycles in racks externally;
 - c. Frequent enough service to be useful;
 - d. Having sufficient capacity to carry expected numbers comfortably including those with bicycles; and
 - e. Ticketing to enable people to take multiple trips, in multiple directions, on different transport modes, with relative ease.

19. Access to clean, safe and affordable public transport is an equity issue as well; non-car users need to be able to access employment, services, recreation & relatives. While the majority of transport will cover people living in cities, good quality public transport has to meet the needs of rural and regional people, those living in outer suburbs, and those needing to travel across or tangential to the central business districts. In our partially decentralised urban sprawls much travel is not into the metro hub but across or around 'town'. Having to travel to an urban centre to travel out again is wasteful of both energy and people's time.
20. Integrating walking and bicycle use with public transport requires designing an extensive and linked (with existing transport corridors and other networks), provision of secure parking, well maintained, safe to use (free from obstacles, separated from traffic) and secure (well lit, patrolled) network of walking and cycle ways, that actually follow routes that people tend to use (rather than following vacant usable land), to promote their use. Further, heavy and light rail transport is the safest and lowest emission form of transport. It can carry bikes and link with inter-urban transport most easily.
21. Inter-urban travel is challenging in our large and dispersed country. Investment in railways including fast rail between capitals and major regional centres, and promotion of the safety and joy of rail transport are necessary to move people out of the air and onto the rails. Rail is clearly optimal for non-urgent freight and all subsidies on truck transport should be removed except in special circumstances such as servicing of very remote areas.
22. Public health principles from the 19th century show that it is government investment in infrastructure and willingness to regulate that is required to achieve public health benefits for the whole community. The role of government is to lead, to invest in, and to encourage others to action by the types of measures listed.
23. Specific examples include:
 - a. charges that discourage use of vehicles, particularly discouraging entry into central cities, or where access to public transport is possible; and
 - b. subsidies and tax rebates for people and businesses who provide active transport and public transport options and support for themselves or their employees.
24. The 2008 experience in Victoria has demonstrated that in a warming world the ability of both the infrastructure (tracks and road surfaces, train carriages, trams and busses) and equipment (signalling, communications and other) to perform safely and without failure at future expected temperature extremes has to be guaranteed.
25. It is important that the energy needs of existing and any planned further replacement public transport infrastructure and equipment be assessed as it would need to reduce rather than increase greenhouse gas emissions.
26. Reducing short life emissions from the transport sector can have immediate benefits for global warming and for health in reductions of particulate matter (4).
27. Promotion of low emissions vehicles can be achieved by:
 - a. Removal of tax rebates for petrol/diesel vehicles;
 - b. Incentives for providing electric, hybrid or LPG vehicles; and
 - c. Changed fringe benefit tax arrangements to support active and public transport options.
28. Government can enact this via legislation and regulation. Government can lead by example by providing these sorts of benefits to government employees.

PHAA resolves:

29. That the National Office, the Board and all SIGs promote active and public transport whenever possible;
and
30. For the National Office to encourage its own staff to use active and public transport.

ADOPTED 2011

This interim policy was developed and adopted as part of the 2010/2011 policy review process.

References

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4. Unger N, Bond T, Wang J, Koch D, Menon S, Shindell D, et al. Attribution of climate forcing to economic sectors. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. 2010 Feb;107(8):3382-7.