

Transportation



The Issue

- The District of Algoma spans approximately 48,815 square kilometres and contains 22 municipalities, as well as numerous First Nation communities.¹
- Safe, reliable, and affordable transportation is needed to access health care, education, childcare, community organizations, and employment- regardless of income, geographic location, or disability status.²
- The majority of employed Algoma residents travel to work using their own vehicle (83%), which compares to Ontario (72%).¹ However, lack of adequate transportation can create barriers to employment and training, limit participation in sports and community activities, and even restrict access to health and other essential services that are typically less-available in rural areas, leading to exclusion and contributing to poor health.³
 - Greyhound has cancelled their services throughout Algoma.
 - Ontario Northland continues to service parts of Algoma, however residents are limited by infrequent times, long-haul nature that does not favour quick to-and-from trips, and associated travel costs.
- Inadequate public transportation structure contributes to, and exacerbates, poverty.²



Return on Investment

- Municipal policies that systematically address transportation as a public health issue can contribute to significant returns on investment, such as tackling the burden of chronic diseases by providing timely access to care. Additionally, facilitating access to routine health care visits may prevent the need for emergency trips to the hospital via ambulance, as well as mental health crisis situations that involve law enforcement.
- Municipalities that offer subsidized and/or free bus passes to residents may experience the following returns on investment:⁴
 - Increase in ridership for the purpose of purchasing local goods and services.
 - Decrease in municipal costs associated with poverty, violence, and injury, due to an increase in social inclusion and overall wellbeing, particularly among residents who would not normally be able to afford transit travel.



Policy options for Municipal Governments

- Partner with other municipalities, community leaders, provincial government, and academic institutions to **bridge transportation gaps between rural communities and build sustainable transportation solutions** for northern Ontario.
 - E.g., community-based alternative transportation systems, interconnected trail systems, sidewalks, and/or bicycle lanes can be municipally- designed and promoted to residents.^{3,5}
- For communities with local transit services, **consider subsidizing costs and/or piloting free bus passes** in an effort to increase purchasing/use of local goods and services and decrease health inequities.⁴
 - Free bus pass interventions have contributed to an improvement in social inclusion and general wellbeing among transit users.⁴
- Integrate **health equity considerations into Transportation Master Plans** in order to systematically address poverty in the North.⁴
 - Inter-sectoral collaboration during policymaking for public transportation is necessary in order to address population health inequities, such as access to care and services.⁴

Interested in building a healthy community? Contact Algoma Public Health at 705-942-4646 ext. 3066 or info@algomapublichealth.com

References

1. Statistics Canada. (2017). Focus On Geography Series. 2016 Census of Canada.
2. Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa). (2017). alPHa-OPHA Response to Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy Consultation. Retrieved from http://opha.on.ca/getmedia/2a66eb1c-9f91-47da-92f8-b82a75f83032/alPHa_OPHA_PovertyReductionStrategySubmission-and-Letter-June-29-2017.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf
3. Economic and Social Inclusion Incorporation. (2014). Overcoming Poverty Together- The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019. Retrieved from <http://nccdh.ca/images/uploads/comments/NBEconomicSocialInclusionPlan2014-2019.pdf>
4. Algoma Public Health. (2018). Free transportation rapid review (Internal document).
5. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. (2014). Healthy Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans. Retrieved from http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/ify-communities/HealthyCommunity_Design.pdf?sfvrsn=0