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CHILD-FRIENDLY TRANSPORT PLANNING

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1. BACKGROUND

This report arises from work conducted during 2003 in the Halton and Peel regions, just west of Toronto. That project, supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and entitled Kids on the Move in Halton and Peel, examined children's travel in those two suburban regions through examination of available data and through consultations with almost 300 educators, health professionals, municipal staff and politicians, parents, children, safety officials, and many others.^{1†}

The impetus for the work done during 2003 was concern that modern transport practices, particularly automobile dependence, are compromising children's development, through air and noise pollution, physical inactivity, and loss of the intimate contact with surroundings that comes from travel by automobile rather than by foot or by bicycle. Box 1 on the next page summarizes many of the health impacts of transport on children.

Our consultations in Halton and Peel suggested strongly that what is required is a set of provincially endorsed child-friendly land-use and transport planning guidelines. This began with a remark by a land developer who said that within each municipality there should be a person looking out for children's interests, in much the same way as a fire chief reviews a development proposal to ensure that there is adequate access for emergency vehicles. Planning and public health officials warmly embraced this suggestion, saying that doing this would require a set of appropriate guidelines, preferably but not necessarily having provincial government approval.

A model of the kind of guidelines proposed by the municipal officials is the document *Transit-Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines*² issued by the Ontario Ministries of Transportation and Municipal Affairs in April 1992 and still in extensive use in Ontario and elsewhere. Planners and others in Ontario municipalities follow the guidelines when developing land-use and transport plans. The guidelines tell them how to fashion both new development and redevelopment so that residents are going to be more likely to want to use transit and so that transit providers are going to be more likely to provide transit services.

In the same way, a set of *Child-Friendly Land-use and Transport Planning Guidelines* would help planners design communities that met children's needs. The guidelines could cause them to pose questions such as these: Are there sidewalks leading to destinations that children regularly travel to? Are there walls or other sight obstructions along the routes that children frequent? Are traffic lights timed to permit child pedestrians sufficient time to cross? How might neighbourhood parking regulations affecting children's safe travel?

As a step to developing child-friendly planning guidelines, the Centre for Sustainable Transportation has completed a limited literature survey and canvassed several planning experts to determine whether similar guidelines have been developed elsewhere in the world. This report outlines the results of our search.

[†] Superscript numbers refer to 57 reference and other notes that begin on Page 19.

Box 1. Summary of several health impacts of transport on children

- Traffic fatalities are the leading cause of injury death in Canada for children over the age of one year.³
- Less than half of Canadian children walk to school. (Most children who live within three kilometres of school do walk, but a sufficient number live farther from school to bring the average who walk down to less than half of all children.)⁴
- Two out of three Canadian children do not meet average physical activity guidelines to achieve optimum growth and development.⁵
- More than a quarter of Canadian children and youth are overweight.⁶
- Children who live near high-traffic areas (20,000 cars passing per day) may be six times more likely to develop childhood leukemia and other cancers⁷
- Smog has been linked to asthma as both a trigger and possible cause.⁸
- There appears to be no threshold for ozone levels that are safe, and children are particularly susceptible.⁹
- Children may be more vulnerable to airborne pollution because their airways are narrower than those of adults.¹⁰
- Children living in areas with poor air quality have been found to have reduced lung function growth that places them at risk for future respiratory illness.¹¹
- Heavy traffic reduces the independent mobility of children and youth.¹²
- Opportunities and locations for spontaneous, non-structured play are severely restricted by traffic.¹³
- A study of children's exposure to diesel exhaust on school buses in the United States indicated that concentrations of PM_{2.5} were often 5-10 times higher than average levels measured at fixed-site monitoring stations.¹⁴
- Low-level but chronic noise of moderate traffic can stress children and raise their blood pressure, heart rates and levels of stress hormones.¹⁵
- 25-30% of children who survive traffic accidents may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, unless treated. This may include depression, recurring nightmares, difficulty attending to school work, fear of cars.¹⁶
- "In-car benzene concentrations sometimes exceed concentrations in the roadside air by up to four fold. Carbon monoxide concentrations may be more than 10 times higher inside cars than at the side of the road. Elevated in-car pollution concentrations particularly endanger children, the elderly, and people with asthma and other respiratory conditions. They receive little attention. Nevertheless, in-car air pollution may pose one of the greatest modern threats to human health."¹⁷
- In Canada, approximately 30% of greenhouse gas emissions result from transport. These emissions are contributing to global warming, which will have long-term impacts on children.¹⁸

2. CHILD-FRIENDLY TRANSPORT PLANNING: A NEW CONCEPT

The term 'child-friendly transport planning', and variants, is not being used in transport documents and planning literature, nor is it a concept familiar to the experts we contacted in

Canada and elsewhere. The current key concept is that of ‘child-friendly cities’. The spearhead is the Child Friendly Cities initiative (CFC) of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which is at the forefront of efforts to consider children’s needs and aspirations in an urban environment.¹⁹ CFC is responding to the global trend towards urbanization, to recognition that children constitute between 20-50 per cent of many populations, and to commitments made in respect of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.²⁰

The concept of a child friendly city is not based on an ideal end state or a standard model. It is a framework to assist any city to become more child friendly in all aspects of its environment, governance, and services. UNICEF set up the CFC Secretariat at its Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, in September 2000 to support city authorities in developing such frameworks and to support the many people working in different cities to change practices unfriendly to children into systems where children matter.²¹

The CFC Secretariat is documenting and publicizing successful child friendly city initiatives and supporting national and international networks that are working in this area. They use the word ‘child’, but their work also addresses the needs of youth up to 18 years of age. Appendix A, beginning on Page 12 of the present report, provides further details about the CFC initiative.

The CFC Web site features the work of a Canadian organization: the Society for Children and Youth (SCY) of British Columbia.²² SCY has developed a project entitled Child and Youth Friendly Communities. So far, the project has focused on housing and the child’s right to play. Literature on the child’s right to play highlights the need for very young children to live in an environment that does not impose undue limits on their ability to play. Heavy traffic, for example, has been shown to limit the range and diversity of children’s play.²³

Our search encountered two potential sources of information on child-friendly transport planning. The Dutch Institute for Design has published design guidelines for children, in Dutch. Nic Nilsson has published *Barnperspektiv på planeringen*²⁴ (Child’s perspective on planning), in Swedish. As well, Alex van Loon, with the Netherlands Ministry of Transport, has made specific recommendations towards improving the safety of neighbourhoods for child pedestrians and cyclists. His recommendations are included in Appendix B, which begins on Page 15. A team at the Stockholm Institute of Education is analyzing data from a research project regarding children’s travel patterns and factors that influence children’s mobility in an urban environment.²⁵

In the United States, the Community-Based Education Resource (CUBE)²⁶ is championing child-oriented communities. It has developed an educational resource for teachers to work with children on planning. CUBE’s premise is that a community designed for young people will work for everyone. It cites the *Bill of Rights for Kids* created by Aspen architect, Harry Teague, set out in Box 2 on the next page.

Box 2. Harry Teague's Bill of Rights for Kids

The city shall be:

- safe
- in appropriate scale—no walls over four feet
- accessible—youth will have the ability to get from one place to another
- integrated—nature, the community, work, ages, sexes, all will be part of the whole
- a manifestation of tradition—youth will be able to identify cultural anchors whether they be building types and styles, monuments, landmarks, or natural areas

Documents dealing with child friendly cities and communities present the case that communities making special efforts to meet the needs of children will benefit the community as a whole. Authors who approach this from a development perspective note the international development trend that eventually recognized that women's needs and aspirations had to be incorporated into development thinking and plans. Now it is time to extend this to children.

3. TRANSPORT CONCEPTS RELATED TO CHILD-FRIENDLY PLANNING

Within the transport and planning literature, there are concepts and guidelines that may be helpful in the preparation of child-friendly planning guidelines. They include:

- **Comprehensive Transport Planning.** Litman²⁷ discusses the value of moving beyond conventional transport planning and incorporating a more comprehensive view of impacts, costs, and benefits. Comprehensive planning takes into account additional costs that often result from increased roadway capacity and the additional vehicle traffic it produces, and it takes into account additional benefits provided by transport demand management (TDM) strategies that improve transport options and encourage more efficient use of transport system capacity. These additional factors justify policy and planning decisions that emphasize increased transport system diversity and efficiency. Understanding of the costs and benefits of transport on children's health and the limits to their mobility can contribute to more comprehensive planning.
- **Universal Design,** also called 'inclusive design', 'accessible design' or, simply, 'accessibility'. The concept often refers to transport systems that meet the needs of people with disabilities, but its use is evolving to include all people who may experience an accessibility challenge, including children, adults with baby carriages, and cyclists. Developing child-friendly transport guidelines would assist efforts to create more inclusive and accessible transport systems.
- **New Urbanism.** Many new urbanist designs strive to achieve more attractive and efficient communities. They may also afford greater mobility for children. "If you live in a New Urban neighbourhood you can conveniently go shopping and perform other per-

sonal walking or cycling, and your children can walk to school and parks”.²⁸ Other terms such as New Community Design²⁹ capture elements of New Urbanism, including promotion of pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods and less dependence on the automobile.

- **Walkable/Livable Communities.** Dan Burden³⁰ is well known for his promotion of walkable communities. His description of a walkable community takes children’s destinations into account.
- **Social Exclusion.** Applied to transport this concept refers to “constraints that prevent people from participating adequately in society ... particularly people who live in an automobile dependent community and are physically disabled, low income or unable to own and drive a personal automobile”.³¹ The goal of an inclusive transport system could incorporate many of the concepts above so that children and others with limited choices could have more transport options.
- **Transport Resilience.** This concept is usually applied to transport planning regarding security and a system’s response to emergencies. Litman³² notes that TDM strategies contribute to the resilience of transport systems by providing greater transport diversity.
- **Public Health and Land Use Planning.** Recognition that land use planning has impacts on health, physical activity, and mobility is increasing worldwide. Active Living by Design³³ in the United States is spearheading efforts to demonstrate that new collaborations in planning are needed to create environments that contribute to active living and help the public choose more active lifestyles. This involves cooperation amongst government departments across several jurisdictions. Child-friendly transport planning could contribute to more active lifestyles for children and even the wider population who currently have limited transport options or who are affected by heavy traffic density and speed.

4. CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

The Child Friendly Cities initiative noted above promotes the inclusion of children’s needs in urban planning and the inclusion of children (and youth) in planning processes. It makes the case that it is mutually beneficial for children, youth, and planners to engage in a participatory planning process. UNESCO’s Growing Up in Cities Project adopts the same perspective. It has sponsored two books on the subject. *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*³⁴ is a manual for municipal staff who wish to involve children. *Growing Up in An Urbanizing World*³⁵ provides case studies of urban projects that have engaged children in planning.

The overarching rationale for children’s participation in planning is that they have fresh perspectives on the local environment as it pertains to their needs. Their input can be in-

valuable for contributing to a more socially inclusive community, one that recognizes the limited mobility of children, the locations where they generally travel, and the specific hindrances they may encounter. The Centre for Sustainable Transportation's Kids on the Move project engaged 140 elementary students in a discussion about their neighbourhood, where they like to travel, how they usually travel, and what kinds of neighbourhood they would create. Children as young as eight years-old were able to respond to these questions with considerable clarity. Appendix C, beginning on Page 16, outlines additional rationale for children's participation in planning and the benefits of including youth.

Children's Tracks—active in Vestfold county, Norway—is a project that seeks to involve children in transport planning. Children trace their own mobility patterns. They are compiled in the country's GIS project, named Arealis.³⁶

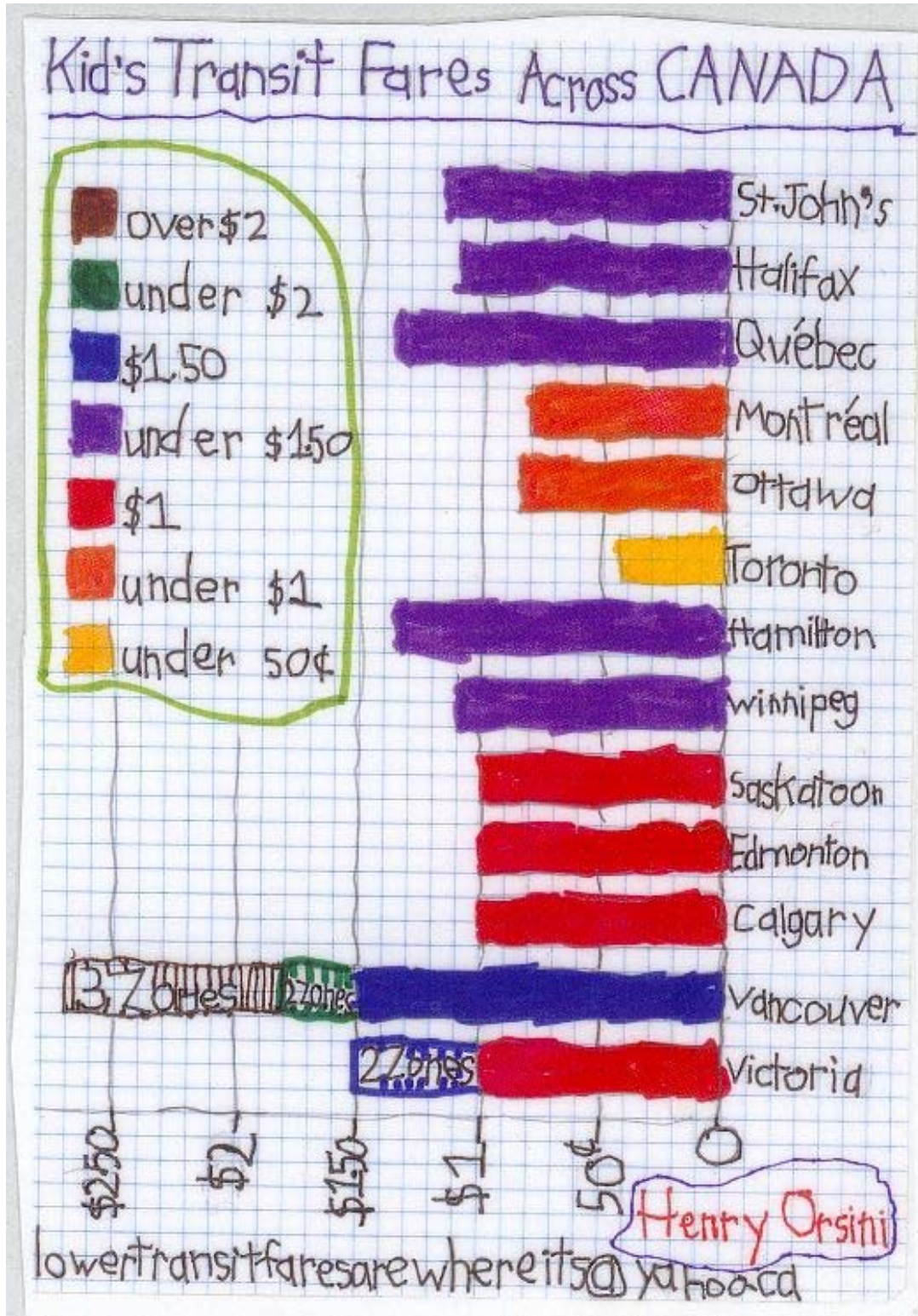
In Canada, the Ontario Walkability Study³⁷ contributed to understanding of children's experiences and aspirations through surveying more than 6,000 elementary school children on Walk to School Day (2000).

A nine year-old Canadian boy, Henry Orsini, has notwaited for transport planners to ask his views. He lives in Vancouver and believes that transit fares for children are too high—indeed the highest in Canada among those he has examined—and he has created a bar chart to demonstrate this (see Box 3 on the next page). Through meetings with executives of Translink (the regional transit authority) he hopes to make the case that lower fees for children are needed to convince adults that transit is a cheaper option than driving. At this time, he argues, parents can drive a family of four and pay for parking for less than the transit fare. Henry's long-range goal is to have children's transit fares across Canada reduced to fifty cents.³⁸

Canadian architect, Stanley King, has developed design workshops with children and youth that have been implemented in Western Canadian communities through programs such as Alberta's Main Street Program. He heads the Co-Design Group in Vancouver,³⁹ and has written the following: "Children aged 9 to 13 respond well. Newly aware of the environment beyond the home, they perceive the streets and parks with fresh eyes and acute senses. Their answers are often not those that would occur to adults. Awareness of risk from traffic, from dangerous people or from design situations that pose a threat is more acute in children than adults."⁴⁰

Of particular use in helping engage children's participation in planning could be a document produced by the Canadian Institute of Planners entitled *A Kid's guide to Building Great Communities: A Manual for Planners and Educators*. The preface includes the following: "Young people represent an important component of the population who have a right to take an active part in decisions that affect the health and well being of their community. Planners have a responsibility to provide young people with opportunities to exercise this right so that they can take on their responsibilities as interested and well-informed citizens."⁴¹

Box 3. Henry Orsini's bar chart of children's transit fares



5. CREATING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES: PUTTING THEM INTO PRACTICE

Our search did not uncover a comprehensive list of existing child-friendly transport guidelines, ready to be applied, but we note a growing movement to recognize that cities need to be more responsive to children. This responsiveness may involve the creation of new policies, new practices that engage children, and new forms of collaboration among levels of government and government departments. Public health advocates have drawn similar conclusions.⁴²

In May 2002, the United Nations General Assembly held a Special Session on Children that endorsed the document *A World Fit for Children*.⁴³ It committed member nations “to develop child friendly communities and cities, and to involve mayors and municipal authorities as primary partners in achieving the new goals set for children. Children are recognized as citizens who have a right to express their opinions and have their views given due consideration. This requires most cities to make institutional, legal, and budgetary reforms and to develop a strategy to transform the living environments of children at the family, neighbourhood and city levels.”⁴⁴

Recommendations and laws are a starting point for institutionalizing support for child friendly planning. Norway has been a leader in this matter. The Norwegian government appointed the world’s first Commissioner for Children in 1981 and it has taken several measures to strengthen perspectives on children regarding land-use planning. The 1989 National Policy Guidelines stated:

The municipality shall organize the planning process to make sure that the points of view concerning children as the affected party are brought to light and that different groups of children and young people are given an opportunity to participate themselves.⁴⁵

Wilhjelm has written about the realization of these policies and guidelines.⁴⁶ She found that when planners experience children’s participation they are delightfully surprised by the useful knowledge children bring to the process. However, many Norwegian children and adults are not aware of their right to participate in planning. Her advice is to create dialogues involving meetings of developers and planners with the public, including children and youth. Nevertheless, Norway is ahead of many industrialized countries in its efforts to create child friendly environments.

We may also look to Italy for examples of child friendly laws and initiatives. The Italian government’s *Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents* (1997) made a formal commitment to meet the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁴⁷ A national fund was created to be used for financing local projects, inter-ministerial cooperation, and the development of new laws. The Ministry of the Environment established a project called *Città Sostenibili delle Bambine e dei Bambini* (Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys). The project promotes new initiatives, opportunities and structures for children but also aims to

encourage a new culture of government of cities and city planning based on the premise that a city suitable for children is more suitable for everyone.⁴⁸

The main objectives of the project are:

- To establish a yearly recognition award for cities that respond to a series of parameters and indicators of “child-urban sustainability”;
- To create a clearing house to disseminate information, experiences and best practices taking place in Italian cities, and
- To organize a yearly international forum, Towards Child Friendly Cities, bringing together representatives of cities from Italy and abroad to exchange experiences and discuss issues and lessons learned.⁴⁹

The yearly recognition award contest involved more than 80 cities in its first year, 1998. Marco Corsi, who works for UNICEF at the Innocenti Research Centre in Florence has written about the Italian efforts to create Child Friendly Cities. He emphasized the importance of institutionalizing the concept of child friendly cities in all levels of government and creating mechanisms for inter-departmental cooperation at the municipal level. He also highlighted the need for public awareness to publicize initiatives and build community participation and support.

Corsi described the indicators that have been developed to evaluate the progress cities are making. One indicator deals with promoting children’s mobility. Improvements in this area have involved “measures to reduce speeds; the creation of highly recognizable road signs (sometimes using symbols chosen and designed by children); the widening and protection of sidewalks, and the creation of pedestrian areas and residential streets (also involving children). There has been considerable expansion of the cycle path network, but mainly in city centres rather than suburban areas.”⁵⁰ Also, minimum-impact public vehicles are coming into use that have the added benefit of reducing air pollution.

The Italian movement toward more child friendly cities is work in progress with the recognition that there is much more to be done. Nevertheless, Italy has made significant strides towards shifting urban planning policy and beginning to engage the public, including children, in planning their environments.

Riggio wrote that a child friendly city “needs to move beyond municipal officials and experts and be progressively reflected in academic curricula and addressed by research”.⁵¹ Postgraduate courses are being developed to train architects, planners, environmental psychologists, and social science students in the principles of child friendly planning.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In our efforts to investigate child-friendly transport planning guidelines we have discovered the rich context of child friendly cities that encompasses all aspects of children's welfare. It has been encouraging to learn of European efforts in this area. The Canadian land developer who envisioned a planning process that includes a children's advocate was unwittingly in line with the child friendly cities movement. The former assumption that a city fit for adults is fit for children is being turned around. The new perspective is that a city designed with children in mind will be more inclusive, and will more readily meet the needs of all members of society.

The social impacts and benefits of transport in the lives of children and youth merit far greater attention in Canada. Attention to child friendly transport planning will assist us to understand these impacts and benefits more fully. The literature search conducted for this report revealed that participatory planning with youth is proving to be a valuable mechanism for nurturing an experience of social inclusion. Once youth became involved in planning their community, adults realized that community design, transport issues, and lack of attention to youth needs are important factors in making youth feel marginalized or included. With few places to travel, or few options for independent travel, youth said they felt bored, harassed for "hanging out" on the streets, and invisible or, worse, unwanted.

Adults may know how to create community environments that promote health and safety, but children and youth are the experts on what fosters or fractures their personal sense of well-being.⁵²

For several decades, Canadian national, provincial, and municipal governments and institutions have grappled with realizing objectives of sustainable development. They have drafted policies and vision statements, and established cross-department and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Until recently, children's transport needs and aspirations have hardly been noted. This has been particularly evident regarding children's health and transport. An exception is the program Active and Safe Routes to School, which stands out as an initiative that has raised awareness about children's mobility in respect to the school trip, and created effective solutions.⁵³ BEST's *offramp* program has played a similar role with respect to youth.⁵⁴ However, we have not seen a coordinated movement in Canada to address the full scope of children's transport and health.

Converging interests around active transport, physical activity, obesity, air pollution, asthma, greenhouse gas reduction, traffic congestion, and road safety would all benefit from a coordinated effort to create more child friendly cities. The development of child friendly transport guidelines will form a critical component, but institutional support will be required to ensure that the guidelines are used effectively. With 80 per cent of Canadians living in urban areas, and the expectation that this will reach 90 per cent in the near future, we will all benefit through the creation of more child-friendly cities.

APPENDIX A: THE CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES SECRETARIAT (from CFC web site, www.childfriendlycities.org)

Why 'Child Friendly' Cities?

Our planet is increasingly urban. More than three billion people – half the world's population – now live in cities. Urban growth is most rapid in developing countries and, by the year 2025, six out of every ten children in the developing world will live in cities. Half of these children will be poor. At the same time, a global process of decentralization is taking place, as local governments assume responsibilities for social sector services that were once provided by national governments.

Children living in the slums or on the streets of developing countries are vulnerable to abandonment, gang life, drug addiction and to every form of exploitation, including child labour, prostitution and abuse. And in the cities of the industrialised world children may be threatened by traffic, pollution, and a shortage of green and open spaces in which to play. In both rich and poor countries, urban children and adolescents may feel imprisoned and isolated.

The City Summit in Istanbul in 1996 stressed that the best indicator of a healthy city is the well-being of its children. A Child Friendly City is a people friendly city, encouraging the participation of citizens – young and old – in its services and its planning.

What is a Child Friendly City (CFC)?

A Child Friendly City guarantees the RIGHT of every young citizen to:

- influence decisions about their city
- express their opinion on the city they want
- participate in family, community and social life
- receive basic services such as health care and education
- drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- walk safely in the streets on their own
- meet friends and play
- have green spaces for plants and animals
- live in an unpolluted environment
- participate in cultural and social events

- be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.

What is the International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities?

Following the 1996 City Summit, UNICEF and partners launched the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) to reach urban children – particularly the poor and the marginalized – with basic services and protection to guarantee their fundamental rights.

Many cities, both in the North and in the South, are now working to become child-friendly and a number of local networks have been created. The time has come to pool these efforts, to share knowledge and consolidate the lessons learned in recent years.

In 2000, a Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities was created at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre for the global exchange of information and resources. Its aim is to provide support to cities that are committed to a rights-based agenda for children.

What the Child Friendly Cities Secretariat does

- Research and Data Collection
- Collects and shares data through a database and field research
- Processes lessons learned and promotes best practices
- Utilises lessons learned for the development of programme tools, methodologies and policies
- Information exchange
- Exchanges experiences North-South
- Maintains a CFC web page
- Produces and disseminates publications
- Networking
- Networks with Municipalities, Mayors, communities, experts and others to strengthen capacity for the development of rights-based agendas for children
- Networks with child / youth groups to empower young citizens to participate in planning for CFCs
- Assists in field consultations and programme development
- Organizes international, regional, national meetings on CFC issues

Join the network

- By sharing information about activities and programmes for children in your city
- By sharing lessons on how your city is managed from the point of view of children and adolescents
- By sharing resources with other cities willing to become child friendly

Where to contact the Child Friendly Cities Secretariat

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www.childfriendlycities.org

The activities of the International Child Friendly Cities Secretariat are carried out in partnership with UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF Headquarters in New York, the Italian National Committee for UNICEF, UN-Habitat and the Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence.

APPENDIX B: BETTER ROAD CONDITIONS FOR CHILDREN

Safer Road Conditions for Children

(From van Loon A, Road Safety for Children: An Accident Analysis for Better Road Conditions for Children in the Netherlands⁵⁵)

Recommendations

From the results of this study, the following recommendations will obtain safer road conditions for children.

- The speed limit in residential zones must be set at 30 km/h along with traffic calming measures. Residential streets with speed limits of 30 km/h including traffic calming are 2-3 times safer than the same streets with a speed limits of 50 km/h and no traffic calming. This is due to a shorter brake distance, a wider visual scope of the driver and a minor injury rate in 30 km/h residential zones;
- In residential areas where children tend to cross over, no sight restraint is allowed. At busy parked streets, special locations to cross with enough sight must be made. High objects along roads must be avoided;
- Crossings on collector roads must be safer by slowing down traffic speed and making better sight conditions;
- A homogenous speed pattern must be obtained by adequately designed traffic calming measures at regular distances;
- Rows of parked cars must be regularly interrupted by an open space where children can cross the street safely;
- One-way streets must be avoided, but when this can't be avoided, traffic calming measures are needed;
- Collectors and arterials should be provided by bicycle lanes;
- Areas or roads near or around playgrounds, playfields, schools and shops must be designed as 30 km/h streets or zones,
- Sight obstruction must be avoided.

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPATION BY CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Implications of Child and Youth Participation

(From Chawla L, *Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment: integrating children and youth into human settlement development*⁵⁶)

The Habitat Agenda from the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1996 recognized in its preamble that *“The needs of children and youth, particularly with regard to their living environment, have to be taken fully into account”* (paragraph 13). In the same paragraph, the preamble stated that: *“Special attention needs to be paid to participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns and neighbourhoods; this is in order to secure the living conditions of children and youth and to make use of their insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment.”*

- Planning teams need to include a representative for children, and whenever possible, children need to have a voice of their own when development decisions are made;
- A focus on children draws attention to their special vulnerability to disease, pollution and other environmental hazards;
- Because children have the longest future of any group in society, they direct policy making toward long-term planning; the same orientation that sustainable development requires;
- At the same time as they represent the future, children’s rapidly developing bodies and minds must be nourished and protected in the immediate present, or a failure to meet their needs will have long-term consequences;
- Attention to children emphasizes the importance of a human development focus in planning;
- Given their relative lack of mobility and their dependence on immediately accessible resources, children draw attention to development at the community level. Small changes in the local environment may have a big impact on children’s lives.

Three main reasons for encouraging children’s participation in development:

- Children will learn formal skills of democratic citizenship in this way;
- They are the best experts on local environment conditions related to their own needs; and
- They acquire a foundation for lifelong habits of environmental interest, concern and care.

The Benefits of Young People's Participation

(From Driskell D, *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*⁵⁷)

A commitment to young people's participation in community development requires understanding what participation is, and appreciating the potential benefits for everyone involved.

Benefits for young people

- Participate in a new and exciting activity.
- Look at and understand their local community and environment in new ways.
- Learn about democracy and tolerance.
- Develop a network of new friends, including community role models and resource people.
- Develop new skills and knowledge
- Help create positive change in the local environment and other aspects of the community
- Develop a sense of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility
- Develop confidence in their abilities to accomplish the goals they set.
- Strengthen their self-esteem, identity and sense of pride.

Benefits for other members of the community

- Interact with young people in positive, constructive ways, helping to overcome the misperceptions and mistrust that often exist between generations.
- Understand how young people in their community view the world, their community and themselves.
- Identify ways in which the quality of life for local young people can be improved.
- Build a stronger sense of community and pride of place.
- Appreciate the ideas and contributions of young people.
- Invest time and energy in the future of the community.

Benefits for planners and policy makers

- More fully understand the needs and issues of the communities they serve.
- Make better, more informed planning and development decisions.
- Educate community members on the inherent complexities and trade-offs involved in policy and development decision-making.
- Implement at the local level the directives and spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Involve young people in efforts to implement sustainable development, thereby helping to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 and Habitat Agenda.
- Create urban environments that are more child-friendly and humane.

END NOTES

- ¹ The 38-page report on the project *Kids on the Move in Halton and Peel* is available at the Centre's Web site at the URL below.
1. <http://www.cstctd.org>. Accessed February 25, 2004.
- ² The Ontario government document *Transit-Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines* is available at the URL below.
1. http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/page_attachments/business/transuppguid/transuppguid-e.pdf. Accessed February 25, 2004.
- ³ Canadian Institute of Child Health (2000) *The Health of Canada's Children*, Third edition, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Ottawa.
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