Date: November 7th, 2012
Resolution #: 03-2012
Moved By: Mike Mcarthur
Seconded By: Merdy Armstrong

Re: Active Transportation

WHEREAS major diseases affecting the quality and length of life of Ontarians are linked to physical inactivity; and

WHEREAS the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008) require that boards of health work with municipalities to support healthy public policies, including policies that enhance the built environment for physical activity and injury prevention; and

WHEREAS the design of our communities has a potent effect on the health of our population in a number of ways; and

WHEREAS the benefits of active transportation are significant and numerous and include health, safety, environmental, social/community, as well as economic; and

WHEREAS there have been numerous calls to action for active transportation including policy recommendation statements identifying essential roles for communities and governments; and

WHEREAS local communities are taking seriously their role in creating supportive environments for active transportation, for example, Share The Road, an active transportation partnership campaign; and

WHEREAS in 2012, local stakeholders identified that active transportation policy is a priority for achieving healthy communities and that opportunities currently exist to shift the allocation of resources to promote health to a greater degree and create healthier communities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Timiskaming Health Unit Board of Health recognize that coordinated efforts with municipal governments, public health and other sectors is required in order to develop a comprehensive, community-based approach to address active transportation; and

FURTHERMORE THAT the Timiskaming Health Unit Board of Health encourage the provincial government and all municipalities within the district to invest in and develop long-term plans for active transportation; and

FURTHER THAT copies of this motion be forwarded to all Ontario boards of health, provincial government partners and local members of provincial parliament, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) and Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM, and the Minister of Transportation...
FURTHER THAT a letter along with this motion be sent to all mayors and reeves within the district emphasizing the opportunity to demonstrate leadership for active transportation during highway and road rehabilitation and resurfacing.

- Carried
- Defeated
- Deferred

Chair - Board of Health
Board of Health Briefing and Resolution

Prepared by:  Kerry Schubert-Mackey, Program Manager
Reviewed by:  Dr. Marlene Spruyt, Medical Officer of Health (a)/Chief Executive Officer
Date:  November 7, 2012
Re:  BOH Resolution for Active Transportation

Purpose and Background
Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease, are the leading cause of death in Ontario. These diseases are largely preventable and place a great burden on individuals, families, communities and the healthcare system. Twenty five per cent of health care costs are due to preventable illnesses. Research shows strong associations between modifiable risk factors such as physical inactivity, unhealthy eating and obesity and the most common chronic diseases. In 2009, obesity, a risk factor for many chronic conditions, was estimated to cost Ontario’s health care system $4.5 billion in direct and indirect costs. In the Timiskaming Health Unit area the per cent of residents (18 years and older) who are obese or are either overweight or obese, is statistically higher than Ontario’s rate.

The rising burden of chronic disease on the health care system has led to many calls for evidence-informed action. This briefing focuses on the recommendations related to physical activity and more specifically active transportation (AT). Active transportation is non-motorized travel, including walking, cycling, and rollerblading.

In her 2010 Annual Report, Health, Not Health Care- Changing the Conversation, the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario Dr. Arlene King called for the re-engineering of activity back into the lives of Ontarians including the need to provide them with safer roads. More recently, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s 2012 Ontario’s Action Plan For Health Care, the first action listed is “Keeping Ontario Healthy” and promoting better health. This action includes a childhood obesity strategy.

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4 Obesity In Canada. (2012). A Joint Report for the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information.
7 Timiskaming Health Unit Data. (2004). Source: Canadian Community Health Survey.
Public Health Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario release a report earlier this year; *Taking Action to Prevent Chronic Disease – Recommendations for a Healthier Ontario*. This report highlights the role of physical activity in diminishing the risk of numerous health conditions ranging from high blood pressure to diabetes and certain cancers. They quote an economic burden of physical inactivity in Ontario at 2.9 billion (direct and indirect health care costs) in 2011. Drawing on the best available evidence, one of the recommendations for population-level policies and interventions to reduce exposure to physical inactivity includes supporting active transportation (AT). They state that comprehensive strategies to accommodate active transportation would increase the number of people making this choice. A comprehensive AT policy specifies development of safe, convenient networks for pedestrians and cyclists thereby facilitating the integration of physical activity into people’s everyday lives.

Ontario’s doctors have also call for action. They report that those who cycle for utility or for pleasure are at risk of injury on Ontario’s roads, and those who do not cycle regularly report that they are dissuaded by their perceived lack of safety. They go on to say that “much more has to be done by provincial and municipal transportation departments to make this form of exercise safer”. Recommendations in the Ontario Medical Association Policy Paper included:

- That the provincial and municipal transportation departments do more to make cycling safer.
- That the provincial government develop policy and programs, including funding, to facilitate safe cycling.
- That municipal governments redouble their efforts to build much-needed cycling infrastructure.
- That connected networks of roads with paved shoulders are needed in rural settings, to allow for the much needed separation between cyclists and fast-travelling vehicles on rural roads.

(Outcome Medical Association Policy Paper – Enhancing cycling safety in Ontario, 2011)

In June of this year, The Ontario Professional Planners Institute called upon planners, the provincial government, municipalities and the public to make non-motorized forms of travel a mainstay of daily life throughout Ontario Communities. They state that too often pedestrian and bicycle considerations are overlooked because they are not part of the plan from the beginning and retrofitting is more expensive than upfront planning. Many Ontario examples of infrastructure, policies and program being developed to increase the use of active transportation modes are cited.

Locally, a Timiskaming Health Unit area Situational Assessment was conducted to further understand the situation, including readiness of the community to move forward with policy actions related to i) active transportation, ii) access to affordable recreation and iii) access to healthy local food. Key insights* from this report related to AT include:

- Overall, readiness was high in both stakeholders and residents to improve all three topics of active transportation, access to healthy local food and affordable access to recreation, provided barriers could be addressed.
- The top two policy options identified in the active transportation topic area were “Build safe and easy-to-use routes for walking/bicycling” and “Ensure maintenance of walking/bicycling routes.”

In addition, several local municipalities and stakeholders have actively collaborated on *Share The Road*, a campaign encouraging safe, active transportation.
In conclusion, the design of our communities has a potent effect on the health of our population in a number of ways including making active transportation an efficient, easy and safe choice. The benefits of active transportation are significant and numerous and include health, safety, environmental, social/community, as well as economic. Notable examples of successful AT strategies in Ontario are growing. Investment in strategies, including infrastructure, would be a demonstration of leadership for positive change.

*Although this report provides insight on the healthy eating and active living situation across the Timiskaming district, the report contains the opinions and perspectives of residents and stakeholders as they were shared with the consultant. In some cases, these opinions may not accurately represent the actual situation in the community. It is important to note that consistent with this type of assessment, several methodological limitations (outlined in the full report) should be noted when interpreting the results.

**Program/Outcome:** Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention

**Financial Implications for Timiskaming Health Unit:** None.

**Strategic Direction and Recommendation:** That the Board of Health for the Timiskaming Health Unit pass a motion to approve resolution #03-2012.