

This submission is based on a report created by students registered in an upper level Kinesiology course at the University of British Columbia. Over the term, the students worked in partnership with City of Vancouver Active Transportation Unit and designed a project to explore attitudes and behaviours towards cycling amongst Vancouver youth aged 12 to 17 and their parents. Their findings were presented at City Studio's Hubbub #10 on April 6th.

BACKGROUND: Cycling is an important part of the City's Transportation 2040 plan yet youth voices are noticeably absent from current data including measuring progress towards 2040 targets (data collected on 18 to 65+). The Walking and Cycling Report Card issues in 2016 by the City also neglected to include youth. This is concerning because recent research points to declines in the percentage of students biking and walking to school (Buliung, Mitra & Faulkner, 2009; McDonald & Aalborg, 2009). This decline is a risk to meeting 2040 targets as physical activity levels between the ages of 9 to 18 are a strong predictor of behaviour in adulthood (Telama et al., 2005).

STUDY: The students of KIN 464 interviewed youth aged 12 to 17 and their parents (6 youth and 4 parents). The participants were recruited from a gym in East Vancouver and all were Vancouver residents from different neighbourhoods. Most of the participants (4 of the 6 youth and 3 of the 4 parents) never or rarely cycled.

When asked what would encourage them to cycle more, participants spoke of community norms with one stating 'If I saw other people biking, I probably would do it as well.' Another stated that if her friends also cycled, she would cycle as well.

Confidence cycling was identified as major theme. For example, one youth who did regularly cycle noted that her confidence in cycling was largely due to having participated in a cycling education program at school. Additionally, because she had received this education, her parents were comfortable permitted her to cycle alone.

Cycling with adults who could model safe cycling behaviour was also deemed to be an effective strategy for developing confidence in young riders.

In addition to confidence, safety was also an important issue. Both youth and their parents spoke to the need for separated bike lanes (barriers between cycling path and traffic). Linking bike routes (ie. ensuring connections between routes) was also reported as a major factor in assessing the overall safety of cycling. By providing clear linkages between routes, it was felt that people would be more inclined to cycling longer distances making cycling a viable option for more trips.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Based on the findings from this project as well as the review of the existing research on cycling, active transportation and youth, the students of KIN 464 have the following recommendations:

1. Increase opportunities for cycling education programs in the schools – this should include information on how to plan cycling trips (ie. selecting safe and continuous routes).

2. Increase opportunities for youth to cycling with adults who can model responsible and safe cycling behaviour. This is particularly important for youth who do not have parents who cycling.

3. Increase opportunities to cycle together – youth are strongly influenced by the behaviours of their peers and initiatives such as cycling ‘school buses’ can be used to promote cycling culture. NOTE: All of these measures need to be supported by continued investment in safe and comfortable cycling infrastructure.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to share our work with Vancouver City Council and our fellow citizen. Our full report and the poster presented at Hubbub #10 are also attached for your information.