

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

NEW STUDY CALLS FOR COMMUNITIES TO MAKE WALKING & CYCLING THE TOP PRIORITY IN TRANSPORTATION PLANS

Burnaby, BC (Monday, June 8, 2009) – A new study from the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) calls for municipal governments to make walking and cycling the top priority in their transportation plans, rather than cars. The study, entitled “Physical Activity and Transportation Benefits of Walkable Approaches to Community Design in British Columbia”, found that designing neighbourhoods where it’s easier to walk and bike can actually influence people to do those activities more often, benefitting their health and enhancing the community. The study is the first of its kind in BC.

Focusing on Metro Vancouver, the study found that adults are 2.5 times more likely to walk when they live in well-connected neighbourhoods with features that are pedestrian-friendly.

It also found that adults who live in walkable neighbourhoods drive 58% less on average than those who don’t.

And the study calls for communities to increase the level of public transit service. It notes that people in areas well-served by transit generally do more walking.

BCRPA Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Allard Strutt says it’s essential that decision-makers take these findings into account when creating plans for new or redeveloping neighbourhoods and commercial areas. “It’s been well established that physical activity makes people healthier and brings communities together. Cars don’t do that. Walking, biking and using transit are also better for the environment. As our neighbourhoods grow and change, our leaders have a responsibility to ensure the places we live and work are designed to encourage people to get out and get moving so that we have a high quality of life for generations to come.”

The study makes a number of other recommendations aimed at supporting public health and enhancing neighbourhoods through measures that encourage walking. The information can be found in the Active Communities section of the BCRPA website:

www.bcrpa.bc.ca/recreation_parks/active_communities/active_transportation.htm

BCRPA commissioned Dr. Lawrence Frank, Bombardier Chair in Sustainable Transportation at UBC’s School of Community and Regional Planning, to conduct the research.

The study is being released as BCRPA hosts a conference and lecture in Vancouver on walking. The lecture highlights what’s being done in other cities around the world to encourage walking, and the benefits to individual health and communities that arise from these measures. The session, entitled “Walking Around the World: Innovation and inspiration for Designing, Engineering and Planning our Cities”, will feature presentations from international walking experts Dr. Rodney Tolley and Bronwen Thornton. The free lecture takes place this evening (June 8, 2009) at 7:00pm at UBC Robson Square in Vancouver.

BACKGROUND:

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association is a not for profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active healthy lifestyles and communities in BC. Established in 1958, the Association is a central resource agency for members and stakeholders of the parks, recreation, physical activity and culture industry, providing leadership, training and support to help meet national, provincial and local priorities. Through a diverse network of partners and extensive programs and services, BCRPA actively advocates accessibility and inclusiveness to recreation and physical activity and strives to bridge the gap between recreation and sport.

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Contact:

Holly-Anne Burrows
Communications Manager, BCRPA
604-629-0965 ext 233
778-918-5792 (cell)
hburrows@bcrpa.bc.ca

For more information, visit: www.bcrpa.bc.ca