FRAMING

ISSUE FRAMING IN EVIDENCE-INFORMED HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY

The ability to frame issues effectively is a key component of healthy public policy development. Framing is critical in identifying both the problem and the solution, and presenting data and issues in ways that are both compelling and resonant for audiences without public health expertise.[1] How a given policy issue is framed can have an enormous impact on the role of evidence and what evidence is considered relevant.[2]

ISSUE FRAMING IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Communities of all shapes and sizes in Canada are working on active transportation. The need to "sell" its benefits and applications with elected officials, department staff, businesses, and community members is often necessary. Transport Canada[3] identified the following key messages to help promote and build support for active transportation within communities, and we have illustrated examples of how our three cases framed these issues in their active transportation policy work[4]:

1 Active transportation meets multiple planning objectives.
AT improves efficiency and effectiveness of transportation system, builds transit ridership, supports "smart growth" planning, climate change and greenhouse gas reduction strategies, as well as revitalization and economic development initiatives.

RED DEER, AB

> The bike project was not intended to compete with the car, it's an attempt to find a place on the road for cyclists.

VANCOUVER, BC

> Careful attention was paid to framing in order to receive as much public support as possible when proposing our modal hierarchy because the media often portrayed the city as waging a war on the car.

HAMILTON, ON

> We're really trying to be more complete and more balanced, and I think we try to avoid saying that we're making it pedestrians first or cycling first or cars first. It's kind of, what's the best balance of all the travel modes at any given time. So in some situations, it might be pedestrian first. In some situations, it'd be car first. It's really about providing modal choice.
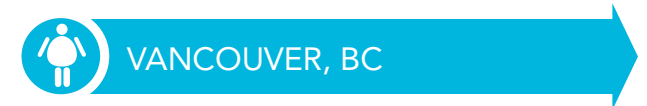
2 Active transportation improves community health, safety and well-being.

AT is a major component of supporting more active, healthier lifestyles that will help reduce obesity levels and associated chronic diseases. The benefits of physical activity promote well-being and help combat mental illness and social isolation.

RED DEER, AB

The Red Deer Primary Care Network played a strong role in consistently framing the project as a way to promote healthy active living.

VANCOUVER, BC

Health-related consequences of inactivity was a major driver.

3 Active transportation is good for the bottom line.

AT is cost-effective and supports "triple bottom line" initiatives. Communities built to support AT are often more attractive to live in and retain property values better than more auto-dependent communities. Transportation infrastructure built for AT is less costly than infrastructure for cars.

RED DEER, AB

Reducing road maintenance, dampening rising health care costs, and reducing costs of bike lane installation via road diets.

VANCOUVER, BC
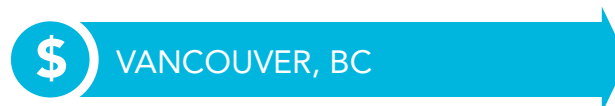
High housing costs, rising fuel costs, and the evolution of the city as a creative, culturally diverse place that can compete in a global marketplace.

HAMILTON, ON

Messaging was framed around the benefits of the policy, and primarily emphasized health, but also the economy, and to a lesser extent the environment, by reinforcing the idea of a walkable city that would attract residents and businesses.

4 Active transportation matters to many groups, departments and people.

AT is about helping people and making communities better, safer, healthier places to live, work and play. With its wide ranging benefits, it should be everyone's agenda, from planning departments to school boards, and from chambers of commerce to health care providers.

RED DEER, AB

The more choices we provide residents, the bigger impact we can have on healthy lifestyles, longevity of our transportation network, and sustainability for our community now and in the future.

VANCOUVER, BC

Framing involved making the link between active transportation and health, sustainability, community, affordability, accessibility, and the overall idea that it was part of creating a vibrant, livable city. When framed in this way the policy provided a variety of themes and values that were important to different citizens, a strategy used to facilitate buy-in.

HAMILTON, ON

Make walking safer and more interesting.

[1] Chapman S. (2001). *Advocacy in public health: Roles and challenges.* International Journal of Epidemiology. 30:1226-32.

[2] Fafard, P. (2008). *Evidence and Healthy Public Policy: Insights from Health and Political Sciences.* Quebec: National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy, Institut national de santé publique.

[3] Transport Canada (2011). *Active Transportation in Canada: A resource and planning guide.* Ottawa: Transport Canada.

[4] Propel Centre for Population Health Impact. (2014). *Understanding healthy public policy processes: A multiple case study of the use of road modifications to improve active transportation.* Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, University of Waterloo. Waterloo, Ontario.