



Choosing bus, for our health

What the research tells us:

- **Walking to the bus, can help everyone achieve daily exercise:** Walking to and from public transport stops can help physically inactive populations attain the recommended minimum level of daily physical activity.
- **Daily active lifestyles, like a walk to the bus, are important:** Population-level efforts to increase non-leisure physical activity, particularly active transport, are greatly needed to help promote and maintain active lifestyles.

Walk to the bus: protect against disease, improve life.

A lack of physical activity contributes to nearly 2,500 deaths in Scotland and costs the NHS around £91 million per year and imposes major costs on the economy. This large disease burden from chronic and preventable diseases also reduces quality of life.

It is increasingly recognised that transport mode choice can significantly affect the amount of physical activity commuters accumulate during the course of a typical work day without planned or coordinated exercise programmes (the benefits also apply to those using public transport for other purposes).

Walking as part of the commute has been suggested as a source of healthful moderate activity, as it is widely recognised that regular walking protects against a range of major diseases.

Use public transport, be more active.

Cross-sectional studies have assessed differences between car, bus and train commuters in level of physical activity.

In one study, those who walk to and from public transport stops obtained an appreciable amount of daily transport-related physical activity (median of 19 minutes).

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This study also suggests that 29% of public transport (train and bus) walkers achieve 30 minutes of daily physical activity solely by walking to and from transport stops. This is supported by more recent research on travel mode use in England which revealed that public transport users accumulated on average 20.5 minutes a day of physical activity as part of public transport journeys. Bus users accumulated 16.0 minutes.

Overall, 21% of bus users achieved 30 min a day of physical activity in the course of their journeys.

Moderate to vigorous physical activity of at least 30 minutes per day is the recommended minimum on at least five days per week for adults.

More bus: less congestion, less pollution, more active adults!

Efforts to increase bus and train usage may not only decrease road congestion and decrease air pollution but may have the added health benefit of increasing the proportion of adults who obtain 30 minutes of daily physical activity.

As other studies have also concluded, more minutes walked per day, or a greater uptake of public transport by inactive adults would likely lead to significantly greater increases in the adult population considered sufficiently active.

Commuters who are walking, walk more in every day life.

US research also finds that public transport users walk to and from stops and accumulate a non-negligible physical activity benefit, but also that a higher percentage of those commuting by walking and by public transport walked to destinations for many other utilitarian purposes.

Changing our streets can be slow; brilliant buses, quicker!

The relationship between public transport and walking is important from a public health perspective because unlike the built environment, which may take a considerable amount of time and money to change, existing public transport service can be enhanced within a relatively short period of time.

Thank you to Professor Adrian Davis for this summary of Essential Evidence.

References: See Essential Evidence No. 6 <https://travelwest.info/project/ee-6-walking-health>

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