

Transport trends depend on walkability to neighbourhood destinations

February 23 2015, by Lily Yeang



The walkability of a neighbourhood can have an impact on resident's health and use of transport. Credit: Francisco Martins

Data collated over seven years from the [RESIDential Environments \(RESIDE\)](#) study supports evidence that neighbourhood walkability (how easy it is to walk around your neighbourhood) is an important determinant of walking for transportation in Australia.

University of Western Australia Professor Hayley Christian says the study provides strong evidence of a causal relationship between the built environment and transport-related [walking](#), which includes walking to or

from somewhere such as work, public transport, shops or a cafe.

"People who had more access to different types of destinations like shops, services, work, school and parks were more connected to grid rather than cul-de-sac streets, and had more public transport stops did more transport walking," Prof Christian says.

"It appears that these features of the built environment encourage more transport walking, and not that people who walk more happen to live in neighbourhoods with these features."

Prof Christian says people living in neighbourhoods with mixed land uses, connected streets, access to public transit, and a diverse number of destinations, such as services, convenience stores and public open spaces, benefited from higher levels of local transport walking.

"We surveyed people in our study before and after they moved house and measured the changes in their neighbourhood environment and transport walking behaviour, so we could see what the cause and effect relationship is," she says.

"Our results highlight that features of the built environment can cause people to change their transport walking behaviour."

Prof Christian says the findings provide policy makers and urban planners with further evidence that certain features of the built environment may be important in the design of neighbourhoods to increase walking for transportation and meet the health needs of residents.

"The evidence suggests that community design affects travel mode choices and levels of walking and/or cycling, with mixed evidence on its impact on obesity," the Prof says. "Specifically, walking for transport

appears to be associated with increased residential density, high street connectivity, mixed land-use and proximity to destinations."

Prof Christian says a number of individual, social and physical environment factors influence walking.

"Supportive social and cultural environments, as well as infrastructure that actively encourages walking and use of [public transport](#), are important for increasing levels of walking," she says.

"Creating pedestrian-friendly [neighbourhoods](#) with access to local amenities and well-designed public open space has the potential to benefit health."

Provided by Science Network WA

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