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## MEMORANDUM

TSC-C 3-2019

**Subject: Students on the Move, Post-Secondary Student Travel and Well-being Study**

**Date: March 26, 2019**

**To: Transportation Steering Committee**

**From: Jackie Gervais, Health Promoter**

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### **Purpose - Students on the Move Research Study**

Numerous studies have identified the impact of transportation on health<sup>1</sup>, but few address the impact of transportation on post-secondary student health and wellbeing. **This study aims to understand travel experiences of Niagara's post-secondary student population and the impact on students' sense of wellbeing and connectedness to the community.** Results will inform local and regional transportation planning, infrastructure and policymaking, as well as the Public Health active transportation program.

### **Timelines**

In the fall of 2018, an on-line survey was sent to about 50% of Brock University students and 33% of Niagara College students. The other 50% of Brock students and about 33% of Niagara College<sup>2</sup> students will receive the on-line survey starting at the end of February. There were 1020, responses in the fall.

Some students (nine) are participating in the photovoice research project to share photos and narratives about their commute. Additional recruitment and follow-up interviews are underway for the winter term.

### **Partnerships**

This study is a partnership between Brock University (Dr. Christopher Fullerton, Associate Professor), Niagara College (Duncan MacDuff, Research Facilitator) and Niagara Region, and is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from: college and university faculty, staff and student unions, stakeholder municipalities, transit commissions, and various Regional departments. It has received clearance

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley, J. K., Hensher, D. A., Stanley, J. R. & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2011). Mobility, social exclusion and well-being: exploring the links. Transportation Research Part A, 45, 789-801.

<sup>2</sup> Niagara College had other competing surveys happening at the same time as the Students on the Move survey. Therefore, the college opted to choose a percentage of their students that would produce a representative sample.

through the Brock University Research ethics board (file # 18-041), Niagara College ethics board (file # NC2018-12), and the Niagara Region Public Health ethics review committee.

## **Budget**

Budget has been included within the regular program operating costs of the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Division of Public Health, with staff support, as needed, from various Regional departments.

## **Background and Rational for Study**

Between 20% and 40% of the population do not drive or have access to an automobile<sup>3</sup> including many post-secondary students. There are approximately 30,000<sup>4</sup> students attending Niagara College and Brock University. Informal community consultations have identified transportation as a challenge for post-secondary students in Niagara. Additionally, the 2015 Niagara Active Transportation Summit prioritized working with schools for safer student travel.

Many students reside off-campus, often outside the municipality that their campus is located. Many rely on walking, cycling, and public transit to get to school, employment, co-op placements, social activities and the necessities of life. However, active transportation and transit systems across Niagara are disjoint, thus creating challenging commute patterns and lengthy journeys. Furthermore, student travel needs can fall outside standard hours of transit operation, thus further jeopardizing students' ease of transportation and potentially negating opportunities (e.g. ability to find jobs or attend appointments).

From a health equity and wellness perspective, people's access to necessities and pleasures of life should not be limited by available modes of transportation, often determined by income and social status, social and physical environments, gender, and culture (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2013). Poorly designed roadways that do not facilitate active transportation put people at risk.

## **Mandates**

The Ontario Public Health Standards mandate Public Health to address the built environment, health equity and physical activity. This research meets these mandates

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<sup>3</sup> Littman, T. (2018). Evaluating active transportation benefits and costs: guide to valuing walking and cycling improvements and encouragement programs. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. Retrieved from [www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf](http://www.vtpi.org/nmt-tdm.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> <https://brocku.ca/about/> & <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/planning-and-institutional-research/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/12/nc-at-a-glance-december-2017.pdf> June, 2018 (18,000<sup>+</sup> Brock + 10,100 full time NC + 1,100 part-time NC + 600 apprenticeship and ELS students = 29,800)

and provides the evidence-base for the future direction of work in active transportation and the built environment.

Niagara Regional Council (2014-2018) identified “Moving People and Goods” and a “Labour Ready Workforce” as strategic priorities.

This study supports findings of the Shape Niagara Survey (Niagara Region, summer 2018), where transportation was identified as one of the community’s key priorities.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

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Health Promoter  
Niagara Region Public Health