Encouraging Healthy School Environments

UC UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

HAEATA COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Research objectives:

- Understand the local context – physical, economic, social and political aspects of the local environment.
- Explore current transport patterns and behaviours of Haeata Community Campus students.
- Determine the aspects of the local transport environment that impact school travel.

Introduction:

- Since the introduction of motor vehicles, private vehicle use has fast become the most convenient and accessible mode of transport for many (Fishman, Böcker, & Helbich, 2015). Modern transport trends have become dominated by private vehicle use, which has a range of impacts on society, households, and individuals (Litman, 2003).
- Active transport (usually encompassing cycling and walking as modes of transport) has a strong positive relationship with physical and mental health outcomes. People who walk or cycle to work are more likely to meet healthy physical activity guidelines than those who do not (Brown, Moodle, Coblac, Mantilla, & Carter, 2017; Fishman et al., 2015).
- Similar to overall population trends, recent data shows that the number of young people that use active transport to get to and from school is declining (Bhosale, Duncan, & Schofield, 2017; Builing, Mitra, & Faulkner, 2009; McDonald, 2007).
- The impacts on physical and mental health, and the ability to gain independence, especially for young people, should not be overlooked when planners and policy advisers are making decisions regarding the way the transport network is designed (Veitch et al., 2017).
- The focus area of this study is Haeata Community Campus; a year 1-13 school in Aranui, Christchurch. Aranui is a relatively deprived area of Aotearoa. There are many unique transport and built environment challenges for this community.

Results:

Through a Maptionnaire survey, we explored the students perceptions of their local school environment:

- Students like the recreational areas they have nearby, such as parks, shopping centres and their school grounds.
- Students feel unsafe and don't enjoy spending time in the streets near the school.
- Students reported parental perceptions of safety were correlated with likelihood of active travel.

"I like to hangout and play basketball with my friends."

"I don't hang out anywhere because everywhere in aranui is dangerous."

75% of students live within two kilometres of school, but less than half engage in active school travel.
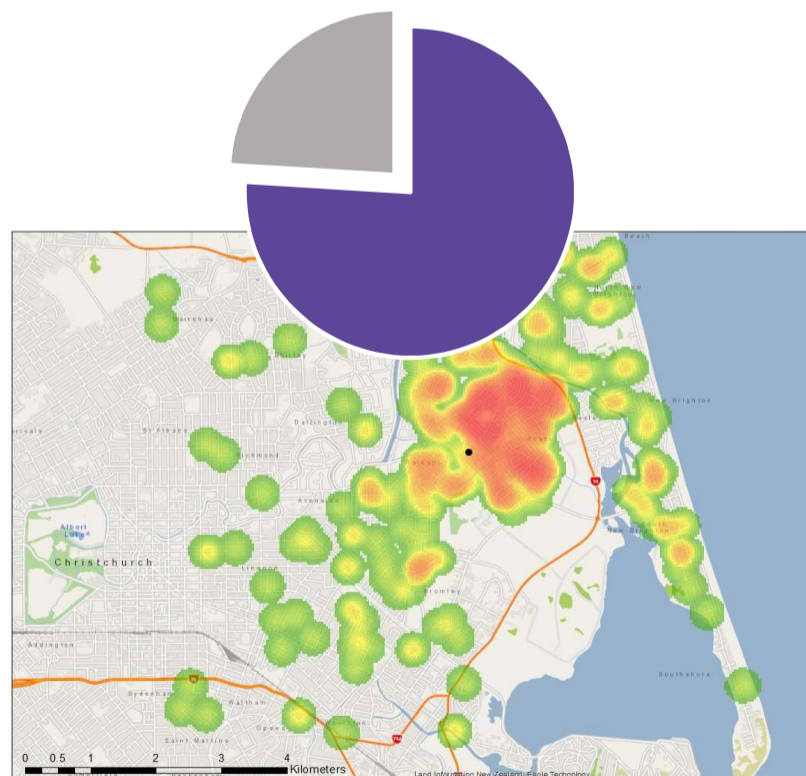

Figure: Density of Haeata Community Campus student population home addresses

Conclusion:

- Rates of active travel are low and local infrastructure to support walking, cycling and public transport is not safe or accessible.
- Safety and distance from school are key barriers to students using active transport. There needs to be genuine travel options for students that are safe and accessible.
- The link between transport, education and health is highly significant. We need to recognise these links more, especially for the wellbeing of young people.
- The local community is important when developing interventions to encourage active school travel uptake.

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