Author's response to reviews

Title: Inequitable walking conditions among older people: examining the inter-relationship of neighbourhood socio-economic status and urban form using a comparative case study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors:

The last comment on the manuscript is presented in bold type face below. Our response follows in regular font. Thank you for this final question. We hope that our response has added value to the paper.

**Editor question / suggestion (same as that of reviewer # 1):**

*I have one question/suggestion for the conclusion. The literature on walkability draws on a variety of measures to describe the (usually) urban landscape, and some indices have been developed or are in development. As of yet there are no "gold standard" measures. This is partly a data issue, but perhaps also a conceptual one that may be informed by qualitative research that draws on the perspectives of different constituents. Does the current paper have any particular implications for measuring walkability? Do the findings offer insights about what is important to capture? Given the largely urban focus of walkability studies, does the paper make a unique contribution to the conceptualization and measurement of walkability in suburban settings? I don't think addressing this is essential for the overall quality of the paper, but it might be of interest to some readers.*

Author response:

In response to this question/suggestion we have added the following section (page 39 - 40):

**Implications for the measurement of walkability**

The development of walkability measures to date has focused on differentiating between built environment characteristics found in higher density inner-urban neighbourhoods and lower density suburban neighbourhoods. Findings from the current study suggest that additional factors must be taken into consideration for a more accurate picture of how neighbourhood environments support walking. Such factors include vehicular volume, designated trucking route distances and pedestrian/vehicle collisions. These factors could become part of a composite index reflecting traffic burden, which could also contain other relevant measures such as vehicular speeds and air quality. Differences observed in the current study suggest that measures capturing the ratio of pedestrian infrastructure,
including recreational pathways, to traffic burden may be useful in differentiating levels of walkability among suburban neighbourhoods. In other words, suburban neighbourhoods may be comparable for proximity of destinations, but walking amenities and hazards may vary greatly.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated that older people experience walking as one part of an integrated transportation system. If walking is to be a practical method of reaching destinations for older adults, public transportation must be easily accessed by walking routes. Therefore, any assessment of walkability must include how well pedestrian infrastructure interfaces with public transit. Finally, in areas with seasonal variation in surface conditions, walkability indices must take these into consideration.

Regards,

Theresa Grant