# Active School Travel and Snacking Behaviours

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| **Background:** Active transport to school (ATS) increases physical activity in adolescents, however, it may increase opportunities to purchase/consume unhealthy foods particularly when combined with surrounding environmental cues. This study examined adolescents’ unhealthy eating behaviours during their school journey by school transport mode (active/motorised/mixed), as well as neighbourhood-level deprivation and weight status.  **Methods:** Adolescents (n=731; 53.5% females; 15.3±1.4 years) from 11 Otago secondary schools were surveyed about school travel and frequency of purchasing/consuming snack foods and soft drinks during their journey. Data were analysed by school transport mode (active/motorised/mixed), neighbourhood-level deprivation (NZ Deprivation Index; low- (Quintiles 1+2), medium- (Quintile 3) and high-deprivation (Quintiles 4+5) and weight status category (healthy weight vs. overweight/obese).  **Results:** Overall, adolescents’ school transport mode was active (28%), motorised (55%) or mixed (17%), and 36.5% of adolescents purchased/consumed snack foods and 26% purchased/consumed soft drinks during ≥1 weekly school trip. Controlling for neighbourhood deprivation, mixed transport users had higher odds of purchasing/consuming snack foods than motorised transport users (odds ratio (OR), 95% CI: 1.37, 1.06-1.78) whereas odds of soft drinks purchase/consumption did not differ significantly by school transport modes. Controlling for school transport mode, adolescents from the least deprived neighbourhoods were less likely to purchase/consume snack foods (low: 0.53, 0.43-0.66; medium: 0.57, 0.44-0.75) and soft drinks (low: 0.37, 0.29-0.47; medium: 0.49, 0.37-0.65) compared to those from the most deprived neighbourhoods (high). Healthy weight adolescents had lower odds of purchasing/consuming snack foods (0.73, 0.61-0.87) and soft drinks (0.65, 0.53-0.80) compared to overweight/obese adolescents.  **Conclusions:** The odds of purchasing/consuming snack foods differed significantly by school transport modes, neighbourhood-level deprivation, and weight status. Adolescents using ATS have well-established health benefits but understanding the role of unhealthy food environments along school routes in food purchasing/consumption behaviours is needed to minimise unintended health consequences. |