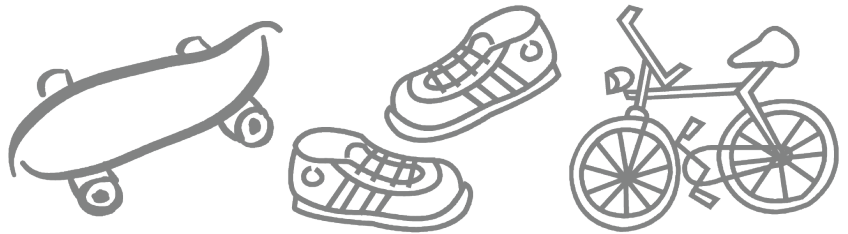


Action Plan Inspiration Guide

May 2011



© May 2011 by Green Communities Canada

Green Communities Canada

Mailing Address: 416 Chambers St, 2nd Floor, Peterborough ON K9H 3V1

Phone: 705-745-7479

Fax: 705-745-7294

Email: info@saferoutestoschool.ca

Website: www.saferoutestoschool.ca

Production of this material has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada, through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer; and from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein represent the views of the Children's Mobility, Health and Happiness: A Canadian School Travel Planning Model project and do not necessarily represent the views of the project funders.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
How to use this guide	4
Why People Make the Transportation Choices They Do	5
Thinking like a parent/caregiver/driver	5
Common Barriers to Active Transportation	7
Top-cited barriers	7
Other issues	7
Effective Interventions	9
The “big three”	9
1. Safety education	9
2. Special events	9
3. Infrastructure improvements	9
Influencing change	10
1. Not walking/cycling alone	10
2. Reduced traffic dangers and safer routes	10
Specific actions	11
Walk the Talk: Special walking events and campaigns	11
Community Case Study: Ontarians CANwalk to school... can you?	13
Community Case Study: Vying for the Golden Shoe Award in Surrey, BC	15
Building Infrastructure, Building Communities	16
Community Case Study: Building Multi-modal and Complete Routes in Vernon, BC	17
Community Case Study: Winnipeg’s Street Art Project	21
Knowledge is Power	23
Community Case Study: Children and Youth in Nova Scotia are <i>Making Tracks</i>	24
Community Case Study: <i>Cool Routes to School</i> engages elementary students in New Westminster, BC	27
Taking It to the Streets	30
Community Case Study: School Walking Route Signage in Ontario	31
Don’t Go It Alone	34
Community Case Study: Walking School Bus Success at Ontario’s Morton Way Public School	36
Driving Change	39
Community Case Study: Setting the Pace in Nova Scotia	40
Growing Support	44
Community Case Study: Waterloo, ON is Making the World Greener One Leaf at a Time	45
All-Weather Fun	47
Community Case Study: Students in Alberta Come Out of Hibernation for Winter Walk Day	48

Counteracting convenience	50
Community Case Study: Nova Scotian Members of the Legislative Assembly Walk the Talk	52
Active & Safe Routes at School	54
Community Case Study: TransLink Lets Kids Ride Free	55
Enforcement	57
Policy Influencing Change	58
Other Resources	59
Reference List	60
Appendix 1: Community-Based Social Marketing and School Travel Planning	61

Introduction

How to use this guide

This guide was created to help School Travel Planning (STP) Facilitators, Municipal STP Steering Committees, School STP Committees, and other STP staff and volunteers formulate an Action Plan, one of the most important products of the School Travel Planning process. After completing the baseline data collection phase of STP, you can start to discuss potential solutions and next steps to address your school community's active transportation barriers thereby beginning to formulate the Action Plan.

The Action Plan Inspiration Guide provides a summary of some key programs and initiatives you may choose to feature in your Action Plan. Note that it is not an exhaustive list, but rather a suggestion of tools that can be used, along with examples of their application.

It's important to remember that simply acknowledging and identifying issues is part of the solution – so you're already on your way!

Guide components

This Action Plan Inspiration Guide contains a multitude of tools, tips and tricks to help you through the Action Plan development process and beyond. It is divided into the following sections:

Why People Make the Transportation Choices They Do

- Offers background into some reasons why parents/caregivers make the travel choices they do

Common Barriers to Active Transportation

- Highlights the top-cited barriers to active transportation
- Defines other oft-occurring AT issues encountered through STP in Canada and internationally

Effective Interventions

- Includes a short description of the three most effective types of actions

Specific Actions

- Outlines some specific actions that could be implemented as part of your School Travel Plan
- Includes case studies from across Canada

Throughout the guide, you'll also find general tips and tricks to support you through this process, and lots of photos to "show" rather than simply "tell."

Let's take action!

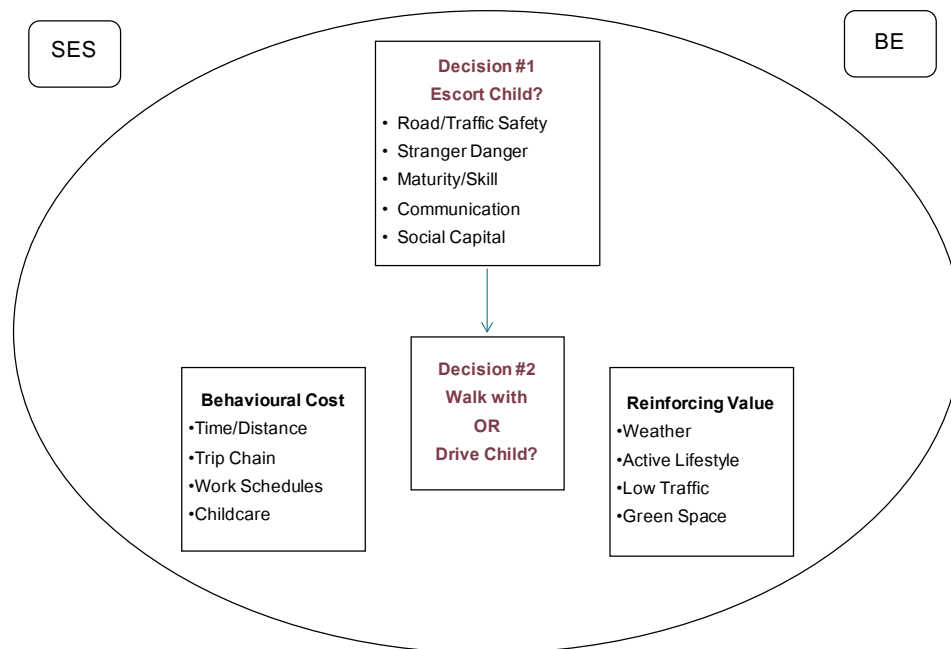
Why People Make the Transportation Choices They Do

Thinking like a parent/caregiver/driver

The STP pilot in 2008-2009 elicited some interesting background into the transportation choices parents and caregivers make for the trip to and from school. Just over 1500 families in the four pilot provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia) completed and returned their Family Surveys; of these, 42% indicated driving as their usual mode of transportation to school, and notably fewer (35%) chose to travel by car on the way from school¹.

Parents and caregivers gave a variety of reasons during the pilot for driving their children to school: inclement weather was cited by 21% of survey respondents; convenience/time pressures were indicated in 18% of the responses; 17% said they drove their children because they were on their way somewhere else; while 16% did so because the distance from home was too far. Rounding out the list of top reasons for driving were personal safety issues and traffic danger, each at 11%.

A study by the University of Toronto's BEAT project (Built Environment and Active Transport – see www.beat.utoronto.ca) investigated the parental decision-making process for the trip to and from school. Researchers found that parents and caregivers tend to choose the mode that is quickest and easiest, reiterating the influence of convenience, and that the decision-making process is two-fold, as outlined in the diagram below.



BEAT's School Travel Parental Decision-Making Framework

Note: SES = socio-economic status; BE = built environment

These responses give us a good idea of the kinds of Action Plan items that could potentially have the biggest impact on reducing the number of students being driven to and from school. Initiatives that aim to counteract the convenience/time aspect of the trip to school can make a difference – some parents and caregivers may be surprised to learn that the time it takes to walk or cycle to school is much less than they anticipated. Alternatively, one could focus on balancing the inconvenience of walking or wheeling (perceived or otherwise) with the benefits of choosing active transportation over driving (such as more quality time together on the walk to school, for instance). These types of approaches could similarly be used to show why AT could be a good option even if the parent or caregiver is passing by the school on their way somewhere else. These ideas will be discussed further on in this guide.

Initiatives that aim to show that students can walk and wheel safely in inclement weather, and maybe even have fun while doing it, stand to have a positive effect. As such, in this guide you'll find more information about Winter Walk Days and other ideas for all-weather active school travel.

The distance issue can be a tough one to tackle; convincing drivers to abandon their car when they live a considerable distance from the school can oftentimes be a tough sell. However, this barrier is sometimes an issue of perception – in the STP pilot, 64.1% of respondents lived 3 kilometres or less from the school, a distance that most elementary-aged children are capable of walking or cycling. If parents or caregivers are not comfortable with allowing their children to walk or wheel the full distance from their home to the school, the students could be dropped off some distance away from the school to walk the remainder of the way. More information on these types of initiatives can be found the Specific Actions section.

Personal safety issues and traffic danger both contribute to the security and well-being of students on their journey to school. Programs like the Walking School Bus, Walking Buddies, the Pace Car Program, and initiatives that focus on creating and/or identifying safe routes help bring the community together to address these types of safety issues more cohesively.

It's important to remember that you're unlikely to get all drivers to start using AT for the trip to school. However, by tailoring your Action Plan initiatives to help address some of the main reasons why parents and caregivers prefer to drive their children to school, you can have an impact. Follow-up data reported by families in the STP pilot indicated that 13% chose to drive less after the program was initiated, and 14% of families reported that traffic outside of the school had decreased.

Of course, in order to foster a change in behaviour, it's important to consider not only what your program does, but how it does it. Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) provides a valuable means of designing programs to positively affect the transportation choices that students, parents and caregivers make. An introduction to CBSM and its application to STP can be found in Appendix 1: Community-Based Social Marketing and School Travel Planning.

Did You Know...

... at the World Record Walk held in Toronto in 2007, participants were commonly surprised that it took such a short amount of time (12-15 minutes) to walk one kilometre. Perception can have a real impact on people's transportation choices!

Common Barriers to Active Transportation

Top-cited barriers

Despite the diversity in STP school communities involved in the STP pilot, school route concerns listed by parents and caregivers have some distinct similarities. The top five cited barriers to date are:

1. Fast cars/busy road/cannot cross easily
2. Unsafe drivers (i.e. ignoring signs, taking u-turns, failing to stop at crosswalks, etc.)
3. Crosswalk or crosswalk upgrades needed (such as repainting lines or improving lighting)
4. Sidewalks absent, in poor condition, or too near the road
5. Parked/stopped cars block traffic and/or sidewalks

Ironically, many of these barriers spur parents and caregivers to think that their child would be safer if he or she was driven to school, creating a vehicular snowball effect – the more cars on the road, the more parents and caregivers will drive their children, which adds more cars to the road, and so the cycle continues. These issues highlight the need to educate the school community on the many benefits of getting out of their cars and into active travel.

Other issues

The 2008 pilot unearthed some relatively unique barriers to active travel, some of which required “out of the box” interventions. In Nova Scotia, parents and caregivers in one neighbourhood were hesitant to allow their children to walk or cycle to school in the fall and winter months because it was often dark by the time they headed home and one of the key intersections was missing a street light. The local councillor brought this obvious safety issue up to Municipal Council, and within weeks, a light was installed. Without STP, this issue may not have been discovered and resolved so expediently.

Did You Know...

... 40% of parents and caregivers indicate they would allow their children to walk if they were not alone*.

*according to 2008 baseline Family Survey summary

At another school located on a secondary highway, it was discovered through survey comments that a passing lane existed within the school zone. After a quick phone call to the Department of Transportation to bring this issue to their attention, the passing lane was painted over only days later – a simple fix that resulted in a big safety boost. The expertise and resources of the Municipal STP Steering Committee can provide great help for these types of issues.

Other inconvenient and unpleasant route features may have similarly quick fixes, or may simply require some innovative thinking. One respondent during the 2008 pilot cited “falling trees/tree limbs” as an issue along their preferred route, which could possibly be resolved with a simple call to the municipality’s maintenance department. Some school communities have found that pathway

blockages and visibility issues caused by overgrown trees and shrubs can be combated quickly and easily, once they are drawn to the right person's attention. Other issues, such as unsightly garbage along a route could be tackled with a combination of group effort and ingenuity: consider organizing a community pick-up, with prizes going to the individual or group that picks up the most bags of trash! Not only will this type of activity help solve the problem, it can also help to increase individuals' sense of connection to and caring for their community.

Whatever the travel issues reported in your Family Surveys, you and your STP committees will want to design an Action Plan that best suits each school community's unique situation. While it makes sense to put the most focus on those barriers that are affecting the most people, don't forget to look into some of the less-reported problems that could be relatively quick, simple – and even fun – to address, and take advantage of resolution opportunities that can bring the community together.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Further information on Community-Based Social Marketing can be found at www.cbsm.com.

For more insight into how to apply CBSM to sustainable transportation initiatives, check out Transport Canada's Changing Transportation Behaviours: A Social Marketing Planning Guide at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/programs/ctb.pdf>.

Effective Interventions

The “big three”

Just as we've seen a pattern emerge with the barriers to AT faced by schools across the country, so too is there a trend in the type of STP Action Plan interventions that parents and caregivers feel have had the greatest impact to date. Of course, these activities may not make the top three – or perhaps even the top ten – in an STP school's Action Plan, but it's a good idea to consider the types of interventions that parents and caregivers have been especially interested in so far.

1. Safety education

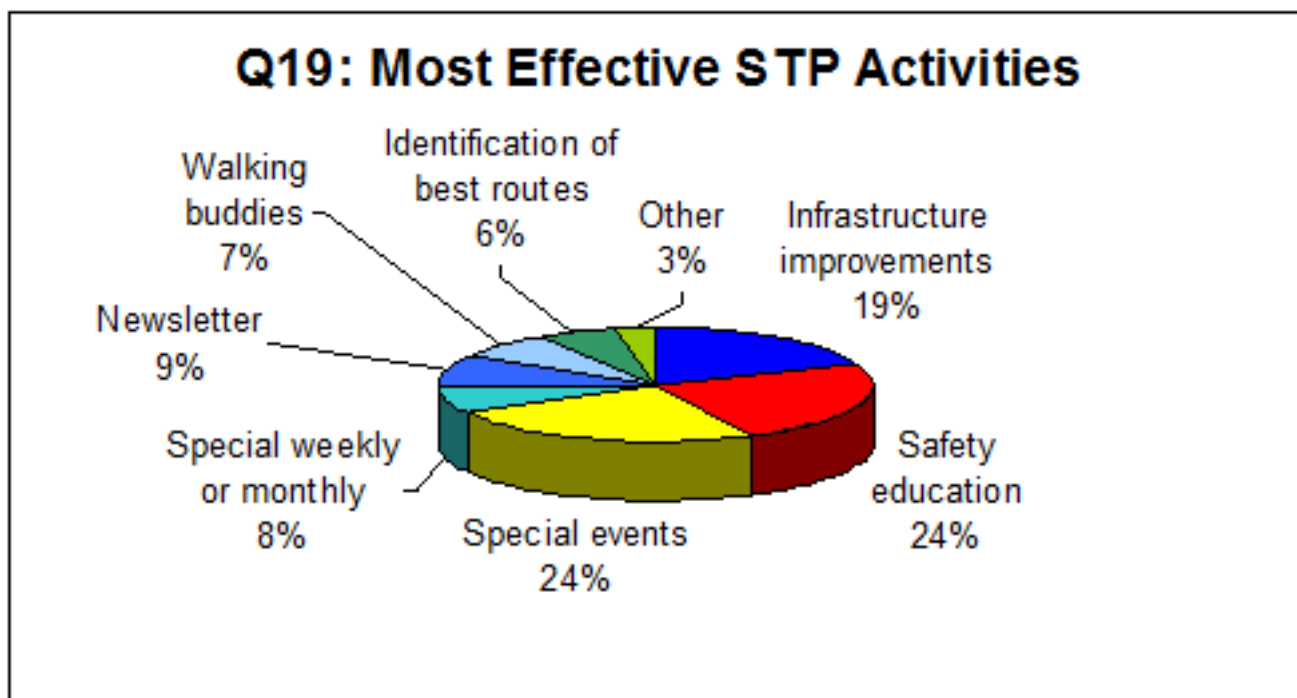
24% of survey respondents rated this activity highly. Canadian initiatives such as I Wanna Walk and Making Tracks aim to teach children and youth the skills they need to walk, cycle, skateboard and in-line skate safely and with confidence.

2. Special events

Special events were also perceived to be effective motivators of change, underlining the importance of organized initiatives such as IWALK, Walk or Wheel on Wednesdays, We Often Walk (or Wheel) – a.k.a. WOW – and other events that bring students, their families, and the school community together to give active transportation a try.

3. Infrastructure improvements

Things like sidewalk construction or upgrades, increased cycling infrastructure, and installation and maintenance of easily-visible and user-friendly crosswalks can go far to encourage the use of active transportation modes more often. Many of these types of initiatives often require a longer-term time commitment to fully bring them into being, but they are an important part of most Action Plans.



The most effective STP activities, according to 2009 Family Survey results

While Family Survey results tell us about common active school travel barriers and effective interventions, they also shed light on what parents and caregivers feel most needs to change in order for them to allow their children to walk or wheel. This data can give us a better idea of what can be done to make a real difference in the way students travel to and from school.

Influencing change

The Family Survey includes questions that aim to get more information about what could be done to get students who are usually driven out of their family cars. Where survey respondents answered the question “I would allow my child to walk/cycle if...,” responses were quite similar for both walking and cycling. The top-cited answers are below.

1. Not walking/cycling alone

Family Survey results indicate that 40% of parents and caregivers who do not usually allow their children to commute to school actively would allow their child to walk to school if they did not walk alone; 33% said the same about letting their child to cycle to school. Clearly, initiatives that address the issue of walking/cycling alone – such as the Walking School Bus and Walking Buddies programs – have the potential for big impact on the number of students whose parents allow them to use active transportation. In fact, 22% of parents and caregivers who reported driving less in the Follow-Up Family Survey identified Walking Buddies initiatives and Walk to School Days as a highly effective STP activities.

Did You Know...

... there is a variety of traffic safety and other training tools available on the Canadian Active & Safe Routes to School Partnership website: <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/partnership/resources.asp#training>.

2. Reduced traffic dangers and safer routes

In order to allow their children to walk to school, 22% of parents and caregivers stated that traffic barriers would need to be reduced, and 25% said decreasing these dangers would make them more comfortable with allowing their child to cycle. Initiatives such as infrastructure improvements that support active transportation, programs that teach and promote more careful and courteous driving habits, and increased active transportation safety education to help teach students how to safely and confidently walk or wheel are therefore key.

Safe Routes Mapping can be used to identify safer travel routes. Outlining the best routes to school for students and parents/caregivers can help them discover how to avoid areas of concern and increase their enjoyment and safety on the trip to school. Evidence supports this: 26% of those who reported driving less in their follow-up rated route identification high on the list of effective STP interventions.

Now that you know more about some of the common concerns and countermeasures identified in Canada’s STP program, you can use this larger picture to help you decide which STP initiatives could be most effective for your school. The following section is meant to provide you with a bit of inspiration about the kinds of activities you could consider in your Action Plan.

Specific actions

Developing an Action Plan can feel like a daunting task – planning for change in the short-, medium- and long-term requires careful consideration of the programs and initiatives that would best fit each individual school community. Remember that the Action Plan – and in fact the entire School Travel Plan – is meant to be a living document that changes as the STP process moves forward: ideas that were initially included might be removed if they are not showing success; new ideas might be developed and added as inspiration strikes or as the school community's reality changes. The interventions described below are meant to help get your creative juices flowing so you can develop an exciting Action Plan – one that will evolve and change as the STP process continues in the years to come.

Who's Liable?

When planning special walking initiatives such as Walk to School Days and Walking School Buses, you might come face to face with concerns about liability and risk.

Municipal Risk Services Ltd. examined these concerns and put fears to rest. You can view a webinar on this subject and download the report labelled Risk Management and Active School Travel, at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltravel.asp.

Walk the Talk: Special walking events and campaigns

Special walking events and campaigns have formed the backbone of many Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) programs for years. One-off events, such as Walk to School Day, and semi-regular initiatives, such as monthly Walk on Wednesdays, can be an effective first step towards getting people turned on to the idea of walking or wheeling to school.

In fact, **International Walk to School Month (IWALK)** was developed to do just that. First launched in Chicago in 1998 and then spreading internationally in 1999-2000, IWALK provides a fun, inclusive way for people to join others from their community and around the globe as they practice using active transportation for the school run, even for just one day. Hopefully, once they've tried it, students and their families will realize the benefits of walking and wheeling to school and will choose to use active transportation more often.

Schools that participate in IWALK have the option of taking part for only one day, a week, or the entire month, and each school community chooses its own theme: health, safety, the environment, or any other motivation that is important to them. Other than the dates (Walk to School Month falls in October, with Walk to School Week being the first full week of that month), the IWALK initiative is completely flexible and limited only by the imagination of each participating school.

Did You Know...

... Morton Way Public School in Brampton, ON won the International Walk to School Award in 2006 for their amazing walking programs and incredible participation rate (over 90% on some days!) Find out more at <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkwheelwed.asp>.

Many ASRTS programs have developed directed initiatives that schools can use to promote active school travel beyond IWALK. One common tactic is to designate one day each week (or each month), during which walking and wheeling is especially encouraged, such as **Walking (or Wheeling) Wednesdays**.

Other than a few suggested components, there is no hard and fast rule for what a designated walking or wheeling day should look like. Advertising the initiative well, keeping track of how many students participate, and providing incentives for those who participate (such as a special privilege or award) can increase success, but the specifics are up to the participating school.

The School STP Committee may choose another day of the week, such as “Trekking Tuesday” or “Footy Friday.” They might keep track of the number of kilometres each student walks, or perhaps tally the distance walked by each classroom or the entire school. They could pick an overall theme for the initiative, or they may decide to change the focus each week or each month. Whatever they choose, keeping the program fun and engaging will help ensure that students want to participate.

To help encourage greater participation in AT, Ontario launched a province-wide campaign called **iCANwalk to school... can you?** in fall 2010 as outlined in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

Ontarians CANwalk to school... can you?

In 2010, Green Communities Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario collaborated to bring Ontario schools an exciting new spin on walking to school or walking at school throughout the year. Schools that registered for International Walk to School Month (IWALK) were asked to also take the **iCANwalk to school ... can you?** pledge by checking the option on the registration form.

Pledge collection started on IWALK Day 2010 when schools began logging kilometres walked by students and staff on Green Communities Canada's Active & Safe Routes to School website, a commitment that will continue throughout the 2010-11 school year.

Schools are encouraged to participate in the initiative any way they like, whether they choose to run a weekly or monthly walk to school/walk at school campaign, to participate in Winter Walk Day and Spring into Spring, or to develop their own walking activities. Schools that take the pledge and log their kilometres throughout the school year are eligible for prizes to be selected using the Heart and Stroke Foundation's HeartSmart™ Points.



The Heart and Stroke Foundation brings its unique resources to the project through Spark Together for Healthy Kids, Jump Rope for Heart, and the Heart Healthy Kids tool kit. To learn more visit <http://tinyurl.com/hsspark>.

The **iCANwalk to school...can you?** initiative was inspired by the Ontario-wide iCANwalk community engagement campaign, launched provincially in early 2010 by Green Communities Canada – see www.icanwalk.ca for details.

For more information about the **iCANwalk to school...can you?** initiative contact info@saferoutestoschool.ca or visit www.saferoutestoschool.ca/icanwalk/default.asp.

Walking or wheeling the entire distance from home to school is often not a feasible option for individuals who are bussed or those who have mobility challenges. In such cases, encouraging walking or wheeling for a portion of the trip allows these students to be involved and still affords them the benefits of using active transportation.

Thinking Outside the Box

In Winnipeg, MB, École Howden received permission to use the parking lot at the nearby CanadInns hotel as a drop-off zone for students.

Walk a Block or Park and Stride initiatives encourage families who drive to school to park a distance away and actively commute the rest of the way. Schools can work with the school board and municipality to identify safe drop-off zones for students who arrive by personal vehicle. Students can then continue on their own or with an organized Walking School Bus to the school grounds. By decreasing the distance that a student is driven, Walk a Block and Park and Stride programs can help decrease congestion in front of the school, making the school community safer and less hectic during drop-off and pick-up times.

Bussed students may or may not be able to participate in Walk a Block or Park and Stride initiatives – some school boards will not allow students to be dropped off anywhere except the school grounds. As promoted through the WOW program, these students can still take part in walking and wheeling initiatives through intentional walks at recess, lunch or before and after school.

As mentioned, incentives can go a long way to encourage active school travel, and they needn't be expensive or elaborate to make a real change. In the following Community Case Study, you'll find out more about how a simple incentive elicited big change for some elementary schools in Surrey, BC.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Information on International Walk to School can be found on the IWALK website at www.iwalktoschool.org, or on Green Communities Canada's Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) website under "Walking Programs" at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/programs.asp. Keep updated on the latest IWALK news by "liking" the IWALK Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/International-Walk-to-School/167720066595212>.

More information about and examples of Walking (or Wheeling) Wednesdays and other walking and wheeling initiatives can also be found on the Green Communities Canada ASRTS website: www.saferoutestoschool.ca.

Community Case Study

Vying for the Golden Shoe Award in Surrey, BC

Each year, British Columbia's city of Surrey features a seven week long Environmental Extravaganza that celebrates its parks and everything nature-related from Earth Day in April to World Oceans Day in June. 2010 marked the ninth year that the celebration included a Walk to School competition, but this year had a twist: the Surrey Mayor's Golden Shoe Award wasn't granted to the school with the greatest number of walkers (as in years past), but rather to the school boasting a sustainable, innovative approach to positive change. Schools submitted activity ideas to BC's Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions (HASTE), including classroom challenges like those at Woodward Hill, where monthly Walking Wednesdays – originally developed under a classroom teacher's leadership – have become a fun weekly occurrence.

The city's STP schools included in their submission their participation in the CycleSmarts Bicycle Safety Program (organized by the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition and funded by the City of Surrey), which was delivered over a 3-day period to students in Grades 3 – 6 at each of the schools.

George Greenaway Elementary, an STP school, was a co-winner of the competition. The school organized neighbourhood walking routes and hosted a celebratory Walk to School on Earth Day with Mayor Watts, School Trustee Laurae McNally and singer Charlotte Diamond as a kick-off to an on-going, school-wide Walk to School challenge. George Greenaway also changed school policy to allow for safe wheeling (cycling or otherwise) on school grounds.



Bridgeview Walking School Bus students, parent representatives, teachers, and a local RCMP officer proudly receive the City of Surrey's Golden Shoe Award from Mayor Watts

Another STP school, Bridgeview Elementary, also shared top prize. The school's winning campaign included Walk (to School) and Read Fridays, teacher-led skateboarding lessons, the development of an Idle-Free Zone, and a daily community Walking School Bus (WSB) organized by local parents. Rather than worrying about each parent taking their turn to lead the WSB, the group let the initiative take a more organic form, welcoming anyone who could join in on the pre-arranged route to school and making the trek with up to thirty children each day.

For more information on Surrey's Environmental Extravaganza, the Golden Shoe Award, or other initiatives outlined above, please visit the following partner websites: the Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions (HASTE) at www.hastebc.org; the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition (VACC) at www.vacc.bc.ca; and the city of Surrey at www.surrey.ca/transportation.

Building Infrastructure, Building Communities

Changes to encourage walking and wheeling

As mentioned, the condition of active transportation infrastructure can have a big impact on the rates of walking and wheeling in a community – infrastructure issues account for two of the top five barriers cited on STP surveys. Unsafe or non-existent crosswalks, poorly designed or missing sidewalks and sub-standard cycling routes can all contribute to pedestrians' and cyclists' personal risk and feelings of insecurity.

Infrastructure development and upgrading are costly items, and consequently it can take some time for improvements to be made – if infrastructure-related improvements are a part of the Action Plan, you may have to be prepared to wait for significant change. Major improvements can, however, happen more quickly if the key players are on board with STP and the timing is right. Such was the case in Vernon, BC, where big changes were orchestrated in a short period of time, as described in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

Building Multi-modal and Complete Routes in Vernon, BC

Municipal staff members in Vernon, BC use the information gleaned from participation in School Travel Planning to improve how they allocate their active transportation infrastructure budget. City officials considered the data from Family Surveys and STP committee feedback to help them identify the best use of resources to ensure the greatest benefit for the community.

In 2008, city officials developed a new transportation plan for Vernon, with a major shift towards multi-modal and complete routes. The work included identifying deficiencies in AT infrastructure where sidewalk and bike route upgrades were needed, with school zone areas taking priority. Vernon city council allocated an ongoing budget of \$400,000 for sidewalks and \$200,000 each for bike lanes and trails. In some cases, transportation staff held off on construction to take into account important information being collected through Vernon's newly-fledged School Travel Planning program at Ellison, Harwood and Okanagan Landing elementary schools. The STP surveys and Walkabouts identified areas with the most significant issues and the routes with the greatest potential for AT use, allowing the City to prioritize those areas for infrastructure development.

Staff from engineering, operations and planning departments worked together, moving quickly to continue with their new transportation plan. In less than a year – before any School Travel Plans were even completed – details were developed, funding was allocated, and construction began.

Initiatives so far have included the construction of pedestrian and bike lanes along multiple routes, and multi-use paths and connectors along others. In some areas, pedestrian-activated crossing lights have been installed in conjunction with crosswalk improvements, with school routes taking priority. Other big-ticket budget items have included retrofitting Fulton Bridge to allow safe pedestrian access.



One costly project was the Fulton Bridge retrofit to add pedestrian access



Upgrades included the installation of a multi-use path, crosswalk improvements and pedestrian-activated lights

Participation in STP has also helped staff solidify – and where necessary, modify – other plans for infrastructure development, such as street reconstruction after sewer upgrades. When rebuilding recently-repaved 20th Street, for example, city officials tacked on plans for the installation of pedestrian-activated lights and a multi-use path that included a physical separation from busy street traffic.



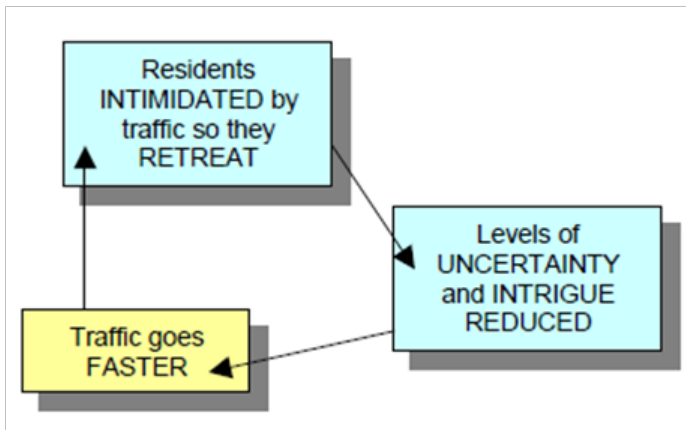
The new multi-use path includes a distinct separation from the road at many points along its length

The city is already reaping the benefits of their forethought. In one school community, traffic speed within the school zone was historically a common concern. Since narrowing the roads and widening the sidewalks, speed counts conducted during school hours show that speeding vehicles are no longer an issue.

Vernon city leaders have truly embraced the School Travel Planning process, recognizing the benefits it brings to their city – and people are noticing. All three schools that have participated in STP receive numerous excellent comments from parents, school staff, and the school board. Municipal council is impressed as well, with one local councillor making a point to comment on how great the process, and related progress, has been so far.

For more information, please contact the City of Vernon's Transportation Department by email at cdd@vernon.ca or eng@vernon.ca, by phone at 250.545.1361, or through their website at www.vernon.ca. School Travel Planning in BC is lead by the Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions (HASTE) (www.hastebc.org).

While poor AT infrastructure can have a big influence on the behaviour of pedestrians and cyclists, poor road design can also affect drivers. Wider streets, especially those without sidewalks and with sparse vegetation, can make a residential street feel less like a friendly, walkable neighbourhood and more like a thoroughfare. The resulting traffic issues make residents less likely to use their streets for active transportation, which also gives drivers “permission” to drive more quickly, creating a snowball effect².



The vicious cycle of driver confidence and traffic speed versus resident retreat

David Engwicht of Creative Communities International calls this phenomenon “psychological retreat,” suggesting that the counter to this effect lies in intrigue and uncertainty: creating vibrant, engaging communities with a distinct human presence to help tame traffic. Bringing people out of their houses and onto the street brings a sense of the unexpected to the neighbourhood, and thus makes drivers slow down – toys in a front yard, for example, signal that children are playing in the area and need to be considered.

Getting the community back out and about in the neighbourhood by congregating on sidewalks and street corners as they walk to

school and other destinations helps create a sense of uncertainty and perhaps a little bit of intrigue in drivers, which can slow traffic down. Each resident who spends time on the streets as a pedestrian is one more person who is out of their car and participating in their community. By organizing walking and cycling groups (such as Walking and Cycling School Buses, discussed later in this guide) and holding school events (such as STP launches) outside, STP Committees can help increase visible street activity and contribute to the process of reclaiming the road.

An overabundance of signs can impact not only the aesthetic of the street, but can also add to the confusion of drivers³. In a world filled with signs telling us where or where not to turn, when to stop, and how fast to go, the amount of information being relayed to drivers can be staggering, and sometimes even disorienting.



Excessive road signs can be confusing – even dangerous – for road users

Thinking Outside the Box

The Child- and Youth-Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning Guidelines are an invaluable tool for any professional planner or transportation expert looking to achieve transportation and land-use arrangements that meet the needs of children and youth — and everyone else. The Guidelines have been adapted for each of Canada's ten provinces, as well as for rural communities. Check out the Guidelines for your province at www.kidsonthemove.ca.

Research shows that excessive signage can actually contribute to increased danger on roads, lulling drivers into a false sense of security that makes them more likely to take risks⁴. In short, by removing all clutter, drivers will notice people on the streets and other notable landscape features, which will create an uncertainty that causes drivers to slow down. City planners in the Netherlands have employed this concept since the '70s with great success⁵. Many communities in Europe are starting to put the theory into practice. For example, removing the white lines on some roads in the English county of Wiltshire has resulted in a 10% reduction in speed. Other areas in the UK that removed the white lines have boasted a 35% decrease in vehicle-related casualties.

Traditional road signage has one other community-destroying flaw: it can be ugly. Nothing ruins a picturesque neighbourhood like a cluster of unsightly signs peppered throughout. With this in mind, transportation and planning staff members in Vernon, BC are turning the idea of sign design on its head, using **children's art on existing school zone signage** as a visual reminder of the need to slow down for children's sake.



Three winning sign designs were chosen from the original artwork submitted by students in Vernon, BC (shown here on display at Vernon's Earth Day 2010 celebration)

An STP school in Winnipeg, Manitoba has also found an innovative way to ask drivers to slow down without relying on traditional signage around the school grounds. Instead, students have teamed up with local organizations to create colourful street art with a message; read more about it in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

Winnipeg's Street Art Project

Students and other residents of a community in Winnipeg's West End decided to take traffic safety into their own hands with a creative idea that encourages drivers to slow down. Children in Grades 3 – 6 at Greenway School designed safety-themed murals and brought their ideas to fruition with the help of the Daniel McIntyre /St. Matthews Community Association and neighbourhood art centre Art City in the spring of 2010.



Students at Winnipeg's Greenway School have created lively street art with a message

The colourful murals stand approximately 3 ½ by 6 feet and are interspersed at three different points along St. Matthews Avenue, which abuts the school grounds. The murals remind motorists to drive the limit, be safe, and watch for children in the area.

Before the art was installed, the area was not very attractive; lots of chain link fence and cracked concrete conveyed a cold, industrial feel. Wide roads without much greenery did little to discourage speeding, and drivers would often use the route as a shortcut. The murals remind drivers that the neighbourhood contains a school zone, and hopefully increases drivers' inclination to slow down, potentially increasing safety.

The project has been a big hit with the school community, prompting plans for the creation of three additional murals, which should be completed in early 2011. Like the first three murals, they will be mounted on the school's fence in the hopes of helping to calm traffic.

The street art project is part of a larger safety program in Winnipeg funded by Safe Kids Canada and FedEx Canada. For more information, please contact Manitoba's Green Action Centre: info@greenactioncentre.ca.

Innovation doesn't have to be restricted to sign and street design. Employing creativity in the development of everyday structures can help jazz up the streetscape and make it more attractive to all road users. Many communities have used street art displays to make an area more appealing and encourage pedestrian traffic.

Creative infrastructure design can also help increase the attractiveness of a space. Park benches and bike racks needn't be traditional to be functional, and a little bit of ingenuity can have added benefits. When the village of Hubbards, Nova Scotia was looking to install bike racks at their farmers' market, community members went beyond the conventional to integrate a piece of local history into the design. They salvaged playground equipment from a local elementary school that was closed down in the mid-90s to build a colourful bike rack. The rack received "priority parking" placement near the entrance to the market where it is prominently visible to all who come and go.

Considering AT infrastructure and the impacts of other elements of street design is an important component of any Action Plan. Thinking ahead – and outside of the box – can help ensure that your community's streetscapes are attractive and welcome to all road users.



Street art in Toronto, ON



This Hubbards Farmers' Market bike rack was constructed from salvaged playground equipment

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Find out more about using people power to tame traffic and reclaim streets on Creative Communities International's website:
www.lesstraffic.com.

Further information on Living Streets can be found at www.best.bc.ca and at www.livingstreets.org.uk.

To learn more about Hubbards' sustainable bike rack project, contact the Route Enhancement Committee of the Aspotogan Peninsula (RECAP): www.aspotoganloop.wordpress.com.

Knowledge is Power

Active Transportation Safety Education

Any School Travel Planning program would be remiss to not include some component of active transportation (AT) safety education. AT safety education can help children, youth and parents become more confident users of active transportation, which could potentially increase participation. It also helps to ensure that children and youth engaging in AT are doing so in the safest and smartest manner possible.

AT safety education initiatives come in all shapes and sizes. They can range from bike rodeos offered by local police to multi-day courses taught by accredited national organizations. While any form of education is good, here are a few things we know can increase the effectiveness of an AT education campaign⁶:

1. Practical, hands-on experience helps to solidify positive behaviours
2. Multi-day programs are preferable over single-session skills training
3. Repeated opportunities to view and display proper skills and behaviours can increase retention
4. Keeping a low ratio of participants-to-instructors can increase effectiveness
5. Making the program fun can help keep participants interested and engaged

Did You Know...

... the Canada Safety Council's "Elmer the Safety Elephant" loves safe travels. His website features an interactive safety village, printable active transportation colouring pages and games, and much more. Check Elmer out at www.elmer.ca.

Any internet search for AT safety education programs will turn up a wealth of options from around the world. There are a few excellent national initiatives, however, that integrate a more Canadian perspective.

Alberta's Department of Transportation provides safety education DVDs called *Point, Pause and Proceed* and a "Safety Central" webpage (www.saferoads.com/safety/index.html) that provides links to a variety of resources about safe cycling for children and youth, educators, and the community as a whole. The program's "Just for Kids" section won the Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals' Traffic Safety Award in May 2005. It includes resources for safe walking, cycling, in-line skating, skateboarding, and bussing.

A Nova Scotia-grown AT safety skills initiative called *Making Tracks*, features hands-on, fun and comprehensive safety skills training in four different modes of transportation – walking, cycling, in-line skating, and skateboarding. The following Community Case Study outlines the basis of this innovative initiative.

Community Case Study

Children and Youth in Nova Scotia are *Making Tracks*

As with School Travel Planning, many Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) programs have long been surveying parents and caregivers to find out why they may be hesitant to allow their children to walk or wheel to school. When staff with Nova Scotia's ASRTS Program discovered that one of the top barriers to active transportation cited by parents in their province included "lack of safety education," they wanted to do something to address the concern.



Making Tracks offers experiential safety education for walking, cycling, in-line skating and skateboarding

However, a scan of the safety education climate in Nova Scotia didn't reveal much – initiatives were mostly limited to the occasional assembly and annual bike rodeos. Knowing that much more comprehensive tools would be necessary to effectively teach active transportation (AT) safety, the group decided to look into developing great tools on their own.

The process began with a detailed study of the best practices of existing national and international AT safety education programs. The resulting report listed elements recommended for an AT safety education program in Nova Scotia and formed the basis of the development of Making Tracks.

Developed in partnership with St. Francis Xavier University, Making Tracks uses a "train-the-trainer" method to teach walking, cycling, in-line skating and skateboarding safety skills to children and youth. Trainers – either adults or older youth – teach the programs to participants over multiple hands-on, skills-based sessions that focus on making active transportation fun.

Making Tracks was pilot tested in 2008-09 with great success, eclipsing program targets to reach hundreds of students in the Halifax Regional Municipality. In 2009-10, the program was rolled out province-wide, and has since been offered to schools, recreation departments and other youth-serving organizations in every corner of Nova Scotia.

**“I am a more comfortable biker because I am able to be safe on the road.
Being a safe and comfortable biker makes biking more fun!”**

- Making Tracks Cycling participant

Active & Safe Routes to School Nova Scotia's (ASRTS-NS) Making Tracks program is made possible with support from the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Mountain Equipment Co-op and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, with partnership support from St. Francis Xavier University and Skate Pass®. For more information about Making Tracks, including links to PDFs of the program manuals, visit <http://saferoutesns.ca/index.php/special/making-tracks/>, or contact ASRTS-NS by email through their online contact form. You can also reach program administrators by phone at 902.442.5055.

While teaching AT safety skills over a longer period of time and across multiple sessions is ideal, some schools or STP champions simply will not have the time or resources to commit to an extended campaign. In these cases, shorter, less-detailed initiatives can be coordinated that will allow students to learn basic AT safety skills that they can then build on individually or with their families.

One such program is **Kidproof's I Wanna Walk** program. Recommended for kids aged 8 to 11, *I Wanna Walk* offers two hours of instruction focused specifically on the active commute to school. It teaches how to fend against the potential dangers of strangers, bullies and traffic, and uses role-play and interactive lessons that teach participants how to plan a safe route to school, how to deal with unforeseen occurrences and how to get help when needed. Going beyond walking, it also touches on cycling, in-line skating, and skateboarding safety. Participants leave knowing that walking is a healthy, environmentally-friendly and viable choice for the trip to and from school.

Another way to deal with limited parental and/or school staff resources when planning an AT safety education campaign is to empower the students to plan and implement an initiative themselves. This method is at the core of BC's Cool Routes to School program, which is the focus of the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

Cool Routes to School engages elementary students in New Westminster, BC

In 2009, three schools in New Westminster, BC were chosen to participate in HASTE's *Cool Routes to School* (CRtS) campaign as part of the school engagement component of the city's Active and Safe Routes to School initiative.

The CRtS campaign employs a student leadership model to help change school transportation attitudes and behaviour. A student engagement facilitator works directly with a "lead class" from each school to develop and implement student-designed and -led initiatives that address barriers to and opportunities for promoting active travel to and from school. The student facilitator works closely with each class to provide education and resources on transportation impacts and options, to assist students with their project design and implementation, and to ensure overall program and learning objectives are being met.



CRtS Logo: Designed by Samantha, grade 5 student, Tweedsmuir Elementary - New Westminster, BC

The CRtS program's main objectives are:

1. To educate students about the benefits of safe and active school travel and;
2. To empower students with the ability to make healthy and sustainable travel choices in the future.

The curriculum is based on a four-step process:

1. Introduction/Sustainable Transportation Overview

The lead class partakes in a comprehensive education component and is introduced to the major issues surrounding school travel, the impacts of transportation systems and decisions, and the range of options available to students and families.

Information about student travel behaviour is an important part of the CRtS campaign and is tracked using HASTE's My Travel Calculator (www.hastebc.org). This student-friendly travel emissions calculator allows students to explore how small changes in their travel choices can make big improvements to their health and the environment.

2. Student-led Ideas and Strategies

By designating a lead class, the CRtS program empowers students to create their own ideas and strategies for increasing active and sustainable travel to school. Emphasis is placed on positive ideas that promote active and safe routes while decreasing the dependence on and impacts of vehicles for school travel. At this stage, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) principles are introduced to be used throughout the program as an important guide for the students' project development and learning process.

3. Launch Assembly

While strategies are unfolding, lead classes are also busy organizing their CRtS launch assembly, which allows students to introduce and promote the program to the entire school. By means of posters, songs, plays, poems and speeches (to name a few), lead classes promote active school travel and inform the student body of upcoming CRtS initiatives while showcasing their talents.

4. Action Planning & School-wide Implementation

After the launch assembly, it's back to work on group projects using the action-planning template. In 2010, lead classes designed active school travel initiatives such as Walking School Bus and bicycle skills activities, and implemented training for CRtS student ambassadors with the goal of presenting their projects to fellow students, at PAC meetings, and at City Council meetings. Once planning is completed, activities are implemented school-wide and measured to assess quality and success.

At the completion of CRtS, students will have undergone a comprehensive program of study, developing a thorough understanding of school transportation issues and options, along with broader transportation-related impacts and issues. The student leadership model generates student-designed projects that are uniquely suited to the travel needs and cultures of individual schools. This model also develops a strong sense of student ownership and accomplishment as a result of producing valuable results for the participants' peers, families and the entire school community.

For more information about *Cool Routes to School* or other STP initiatives in BC, check out the Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions (HASTE) website at www.hastebc.org. You can also contact HASTE by email at info@hastebc.org, or by phone at 778.883.7962.

In some cases, hands-on safety education may not be an option. While experiential education is definitely preferred, there are electronic educational resources that can be helpful. For example, BC's former Autoplan Broker Road Safety Program and the now-defunct Way to Go! School Program produced the **Bike Safe – Walk Smart** DVD to teach pedestrian and cycling safety in the classroom. Aimed at students in kindergarten to grade 7, the DVD illustrates walking and cycling dos and don'ts, and comes with an accompanying teaching guide that includes follow-up activities that can be offered in or outside of the classroom.

Online resources and games can offer fun options for teaching children and youth how to walk and ride safely. **Crucial Crew** is an interactive cycling game where players answer a series of safety-related questions as they work their way through cycling scenarios. The game shows the consequences of incorrect decisions and praises correct ones. (Note that this resource was developed in the UK and therefore is not in Canadian context.)

Whatever the medium, parents and caregivers list AT safety education as one of the most effective STP interventions – indeed; it is an integral component of many STP Action Plans.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Check out the I Wanna Walk program at www.kidproofsafety.com/canada/course/I_Wanna_Walk.aspx.

Those in BC can order their own copy of the Walk Smart – Bike Safe DVD – and check out more of ICBC's online safety resources – by visiting www.icbc.com/4teachers. Individuals from other provinces/territories can order the DVD by contacting Green Communities Canada.

Try out the Crucial Crew game yourself at www.crucial-crew.org/interactive-safety-game/cycling-safety.cfm.

Taking It to the Streets

Best Routes to School Mapping

An important component of any safe and active trip to school is, of course, a safe route. Because the School Travel Planning Family Survey asks families to map out the route(s) they take to and from school along with issues they encounter along the way, STP Facilitators and stakeholders have some invaluable information at their fingertips to help determine the streets and pathways in the school neighbourhood comprise the best routes to school as well as the ones that need some work.

Developing **best routes maps** provides an excellent opportunity to involve and engage students and their families. While participating in safe route identification, children and youth will learn more about their community. The process also offers the chance to promote tips about health and wellness. As an added bonus, taking a hands-on approach to the mapping process provides students with an opportunity to practice AT safety skills.

In Ontario, Green Communities Canada has developed an interactive, inclusive method of developing and clearly identifying best routes to school, as described in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

School Walking Route Signage in Ontario

In 2002, Ontario's Active & Safe Routes to School program initiated a pilot program to address the oft-cited issue of traffic and pedestrian safety. Building on research conducted in 2000-2001, the initiative aimed to designate and clearly identify safe school routes to help encourage more families to choose active modes of travel to school.

The School Walking Route Signage pilot project involved working with schools within the City of Toronto to determine which of the school routes used by students could be safely designated as an official School Walking Route. After mapping commonly-used routes (as determined by surveys of students and their families) at twelve different schools in the city, Green Communities Canada worked with municipal transportation services staff to conduct site visits and determine which routes would be the most suitable for the initiative. As a result, four different schools were chosen for the pilot.



Students at one of the pilot schools prepare to walk the designated school route

Following project approval and confirmation of support from stakeholders such as the Toronto District School Board, the City Councillor representing each pilot school, each school's trustee, and the participating schools' police representative, the monitoring and evaluation component of the pilot commenced. After erecting school walking route signs along each pilot route, Green Communities Canada hired people to conduct baseline traffic observations and monitor the behaviour of pedestrians and drivers along the designated routes throughout May and June 2002.

In November 2002, a take-home parent survey showed overwhelming support for the school walking route signs. Approximately 60% of respondents were aware of the project and many indicated an interest in setting up walking groups along their route.

Since the pilot project, the pilot schools have continued using the school walking route signs, and many more Ontario communities have erected the signs along their own safe school routes. Work is being done to establish an even stronger foothold for the program in the province.

For more information on the School Walking Route signage initiative, contact Green Communities Canada's Active & Safe Routes to School program by email at info@saferoutestoschool.ca, or by phone at 416.488.7263.

Another great resource that brings best routes mapping into the classroom is a program called ***Blazing Trails through the Urban Jungle***. The program guide includes interactive sessions that teachers can integrate into their curriculum to help students learn about transportation options and issues in their community. Each participant receives their own Blazing Trails Student Booklet and, using a map of their school's catchment area, the students develop a personalized map of their neighbourhood that illustrates their favourite spots and points of interest, destinations they walk or wheel to (such as the store or a friend's house), and any other places they want to include.

Students also identify areas that they feel are safe or unsafe while drawing out the route they use when they actively commute to school. They are then encouraged to take their maps home to share with their parents and/or caregivers.

Additional suggested *Blazing Trails through the Urban Jungle* classroom activities include a visioning exercise that asks students to draw an ideal neighbourhood and to work together to create a "Top 10" list of things people can do to make the streets safer. They might plan to organize classroom or school-wide events such as Car Free Days or to use the students' maps to form Walking or Cycling School Buses. Teachers can use the resource in many ways to encourage active school travel.

Vélo Québec's *On the Move to School* campaign also integrates a mapping component into the School Travel Planning program. Using information gathered from the school community and the municipality, Vélo Québec develops four maps for each school: one shows the geographical distribution of the student population, another shows the official school routes (as decided by police) and road signage, the third shows the barriers to AT within the school community, and the final map identifies areas where changes to infrastructure and other local elements could help make the area safer. These maps can be used throughout the STP process to illustrate the various elements that comprise a "best route to school."

Best routes mapping is an excellent way of ensuring that the routes students use to get to school are thoughtfully chosen, while helping parents and caregivers feel more confident about the safety of the course their children are walking or wheeling.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

The process of Best Routes to School Mapping is described at:
www.hastebc.org/tools/mapping-best-walking-routes-school.

Find out more about using people power to tame traffic and reclaim streets on Creative Communities International's website:
www.lesstraffic.com.

Further information on Living Streets can be found at www.best.bc.ca and at www.livingstreets.org.uk.

Download the resources for Blazing Trails through the Urban Jungle at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/classroommapping.asp.

Thinking Outside the Box

Urbanthinkers, a youth engagement organization based in Vancouver, BC, creates community “WalkShed” maps to group streets and trails that share pedestrian accessways toward a common destination, such as a school or park. Similar to a collection of rivers and streams within a watershed, the sidewalks and paths of a WalkShed join together toward a similar destination.



A colour-coded WalkShed map can help families identify friends and neighbours living along shared walking routes. Recognizing others within the same WalkShed zone can invite discussions that will strengthen a school's sense of community.

These acquaintances reinforce active school travel programs as they lead to informal walking groups, formal Walking School Buses and possibly the shared task of walking one another's young children to school. For further examples, see www.urbanthinkers.ca/resources.

Don't Go It Alone

Even on the safest of school routes, many parents and caregivers are nervous about allowing their children to walk or wheel to school on their own. In fact, when parents who usually drive their children to school were asked in the 2009 Family Survey what would need to happen in order for them to allow their children to use active school travel, “not walking alone” was the most-cited answer (40%). Campaigns that promote and facilitate safety in numbers therefore have the potential to significantly impact the number of students using active modes to get to and from school.

Many of us had one or two friends who lived close by and joined us on the walk to school each day. Quite simply, the **Walking Buddies** program encourages students who live near each other to buddy up for the trip to school.

Students can identify and choose walking buddies in a variety of ways. Some schools promote the initiative as a classroom exercise where the teacher helps plot students' homes on a map to see which classmates live close to one another. Parents and caregivers can also be involved in the initiative by pinpointing where they live on a large map that is made available at school functions, such as Parent-Teacher events. Labelling the pins with some sort of identifier, such as the family name or initials, can help parents and caregivers find “buddy families” or allow the activity's champion to identify potential matches. This exercise can be especially helpful at the beginning of the school year, when families new to the school or to the community are just starting to get to know their neighbours.

Walking Buddies can be formalized by designating official *Walking Buddy* days, or students and their families can be left to decide when and how they'd like to travel with their buddies to school. Providing some sort of incentive for students to connect with their walking buddies can help make the initiative a greater success. In Alberta, for example, walking buddies are determined at the neighbourhood level and participants choose their own buddies, registering their partnership via the SHAPE website. After adult verification that the pair has walked or wheeled to school together ten times, they receive a special Walking Buddies zipper pull to wear proudly. When other students witness the recognition and see the prize, more walking buddies tend to join the program, which shows the positive influence that peer groups – and incentives – can have on these types of initiatives.

Even after being matched with a Walking Buddy, some students and their families still may not be comfortable with walking or wheeling to school. While encouraging active school travel is the ideal goal of the program, in these instances a school may choose to encourage matched families to carpool with their buddies instead – this practice will still help to decrease the number of cars in front of the school at pick-up or drop-off times, and as families get to know each other, they might eventually be comfortable with the students walking or wheeling part-way or the entire way to school.

Did You Know...

... just 9 families participating in a Walking School Bus for a full year can reduce climate change-causing emissions by as much as 1000 kg!

(Pembina Institute)

If walking and wheeling in groups of two or three is good, travelling in a larger group is even better! **Walking and Cycling School Buses** (WSB) use the same concept as Walking Buddies to encourage active travel with a goal of “picking up” children along the route. The more, the merrier! WSBs are simply two or more families joining together for the active trip to school, with one or more parents or caregivers (or sometimes, older youth) acting as chaperones.

Travelling in greater numbers and or with an adult or mature student at the helm contributes to greater safety. WSBs also provide a great opportunity for students – and their parents or caregivers – to add some regular physical activity to their day in a fun, social atmosphere.

WSBs function much in the same way as a regular school bus, except the students' feet are their vehicle. The WSB follows a specific route to school, either picking students up along the way, or commencing from a designated meeting area and continuing to the school from there. Many WSBs integrate themes to make the trip even more fun; for instance, students might wear an article of clothing of a pre-determined colour. Other WSBs play music on a portable player along the way to jazz things up a bit. Still others dress in costume or play instruments as they walk. The most important aspect of the WSB, however, is making sure the students practice safety and vigilance (and have fun at the same time).

In Ontario, Morton Way Elementary's long-running WSB program has been exceptionally successful – you can read more about it in the following Community Case Study.

Thinking Outside the Box

The longest running official WSB in Cape Breton, NS is at Membertou Elementary – it has been in action since 2006. Rather than only involving Membertou students, the WSB picks up students from a neighbouring school for part of the trip so that they can walk, too. What a great way to bring the whole community together!

Community Case Study

*Walking School Bus Success at Ontario's Morton Way Public School**

In 1999, Physical Education teacher Kirstin Schwass initiated an inspirational Walking Wednesday program at Morton Way Public School in Brampton, ON. The impetus for the school project stemmed from concerns about children's health and physical activity levels. To help spur the use of active transportation to get to school, the parent council wrote in the school newsletter: "All our children want to walk. Please try to find a neighbour or a group of friends for your child to walk with if you are unable to walk with him/her." Kirstin took it one step further by facilitating the organization of the school's first Walking School Bus.

To encourage families to walk more often and to celebrate Earth Week 2003, the school – under Kirstin's leadership – proclaimed the week "Walking School Bus Week." Rather than go from house to house collecting students, Morton Way selected five meeting locations along main routes to the school. Five parents volunteered to be the WSB "drivers" who would meet participating students at the five locations. Parents escorted their children to the meeting places and, if they were able, continued walking with the group to the school. As further motivation, the principal offered an extra recess to each student who walked every day during Walking School Bus Week.

At the school, a sound system played the school's walking songs to provide a friendly welcome to walking students and parents. Signs were held up outside the school's entrance by student volunteers and were also displayed around the school, depicting various walking slogans, such as: "Morton Way walks," "Peel students walk," and "Show you care, spare the air." Students walking with WSBs also proudly carried their own homemade signs or placards to show their concern for the environment and their health.



The inaugural Walking School Bus Week was so popular that Morton Way decided to do it again for Environment Week during the first week of June. Participation in the two WSB Week events was extremely high and the students responded positively to the concept. The school estimated that by the end of Environment Week more than 90% of the students in grades one to five were walking to school. Prior to the ASRTS program, only about 40% of the students walked to school regularly.

To further reinforce the active transportation message, Kirstin rode her bicycle to school on Clean Air Day; a trip of 21 kilometres each way. Kirstin sums up Morton Way's Walking Program: *"The students who walk to school are very proud of themselves because they know it is the right thing to do. We know that the program is a success when the young students are walking, because we are mobilizing the community. Their parents, grandparents or caregivers will be walking with them. The message is [hitting] home that the children want to walk!"*

For more information on the Walking School Bus program, including a WSB Resource Package, visit the "Walking Programs" section of Green Communities Canada's Active & Safe Routes to School website at:
<http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkingschoolbus.asp>.

*Adapted from http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/downloads/guide/wsb_morton_way.doc

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Check out some of the STP partner websites for more information on Walking Buddies, such as SHAPE-AB (www.shapeab.com/WalkingBuddies.asp) or Manitoba's Green Action Centre (www.greenactioncentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ASRTS-Section-4.4-Walking-Buddies.pdf).

Driving Change

Green Communities Canada has often stated that School Travel Planning and related programs are not anti-car, but rather pro-walking and -cycling. Add to this the fact that “traffic speed and volume” has been one of the top-cited barriers on Family Surveys so far, and any STP program would be remiss if it did not address vehicle-related solutions in addition to AT initiatives.

The following Community Case Study pays tribute to the Pace Car Program; an initiative that was adopted by Nova Scotia’s Active & Safe Routes to School program to address traffic issues in the province – not only around schools, but in neighbourhoods in general.

Community Case Study

Setting the Pace in Nova Scotia

Enlisting the help of municipal stakeholders such as police can go a long way to help combat traffic safety issues. Unfortunately, the police cannot be everywhere at once, and speeding tickets don't always have a long term effect on people's driving habits. To make a real difference, the community can take some of the responsibility for traffic safety into their own hands – and that is the fundamental idea behind the Pace Car Program.

When the Active & Safe Routes to School program in Nova Scotia (ASRTS-NS) discovered the Pace Car Program in 2005, they knew it could be an excellent solution to the growing issue of traffic speed and safety in the province. Developed by David Engwicht of Creative Communities International, the Pace Car Program encourages citizens to control the general speed of traffic themselves.

The Pace Car program employs many elements of Community-Based Social Marketing. Select citizens make a commitment to be safer, more courteous drivers, signing a pledge that they will drive the speed limit at all times. They advertise this commitment by affixing Pace Car emblems on their cars. By driving the limit, Pace Car drivers become “mobile speed bumps,” slowing traffic behind them. As a critical mass of Pace Car drivers builds in a community, traffic speeds are effectively reduced. Drivers also pledge to be more attentive and courteous to other road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists, setting good examples for all drivers to follow.



Pace Car drivers affix emblems to their cars to advertise and show their commitment to the program

Active & Safe Routes to School Nova Scotia (ASRTS-NS) customized the Pace Car Program by designing car clings and other materials based on David Engwicht's vision. In 2007, ASRTS-NS's success with bringing the program to Canada was recognized when Safe Kids Canada (SKC) asked them to highlight Pace Car as one of SKC's featured tools in a Canada-wide pedestrian safety campaign. Using ASRTS-NS's materials as their template, SKC printed car clings and other materials to distribute to communities across the country.

Buy-in continues to grow for the Pace Car Program in Nova Scotia. Currently, there are close to 2500 Pace Car drivers across the province, distributed throughout 25 different communities. ASRTS-NS is committed to taking back the streets, one driver at a time.

ASRTS-NS's Pace Car Program is made possible with support from the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and the IWK Health Centre Foundation. For more information about Pace Car, including links to PDFs of program materials, visit www.pacecar.ca, or contact ASRTS-NS by email through their online contact form. You can also reach them by phone at 902.442.5055.

Information on Safe Kids Canada's Pace Car program can be found at www.safekidscanada.ca/Parents/Safety-Information/Pedestrian-Safety/Pace-Car/Pace-Car-Program.aspx.

The Pace Car Program is a great initiative to help get drivers thinking about the consequences of their driving habits. Carpooling programs can also be a first step towards change. By encouraging drivers to carpool, emissions can be reduced, traffic and congestion in front of the school can be decreased, and people may actually begin to consider the implications of their transportation choices.

Thinking Outside the Box

Changing the way that drivers think about their vehicles – and the spaces that are built for them – can help get people out of the “car mentality.”

Riverview Park Elementary, a STP school in Coquitlam, BC, hosted No Car Day on Earth Day in 2008, completely shutting down the school’s parking lot to vehicle traffic. Instead, the space was filled with chalk drawings, chatting parents and playful students. 100% of the school population participated by walking or wheeling all or part-way to school!

For those who live too far away to walk, **carpool matching** can be facilitated in much the same way as the Walking Buddies program does; mapping out where driving families live and the routes they drive to school can help determine where ride-sharing opportunities exist. As with other STP initiatives, offering incentives for carpooling families can be an effective method of encouraging participation. One STP school in Grande Prairie, AB, for example, included in their Action Plan carpooling incentives such as entries in a draw for gas cards for all carpooling drivers who lived more than 3 kilometres from the school. The school also considered providing priority lane access to those who carpool.

Anti-idling campaigns are another great tool for teaching the impact of car use. Drivers learn about the effects of idling – not only on the environment, but on children’s health, and also on their pocketbooks. Saving money can be a strong motivator; many drivers identify “potential cost savings” as their main interest in related programs that address and promote fuel efficiency⁷.

Idling not only wastefully burns gas and pollutes the air, but for the most part, it is an unnecessary habit. Many drivers mistakenly believe that shutting down their engine during short stops – especially during winter weather – is bad for the vehicle, but in reality idling can actually harm an engine, forcing it to operate inefficiently and contributing to the build-up of soot deposits. In addition, idling for any longer than 10 seconds will burn more fuel than it takes to restart the engine⁸. These and many other downsides of idling can resonate more clearly with drivers if they’re hit where it may hurt the most – their wallets.

In the same vein, letting drivers know about the **cost of the drive to school** may help them consider choosing alternative transportation more often. Online mileage calculators, such as the one on Nova Scotia’s DriveWiser website (www.drivewiser.ca), can help drivers figure out just how much fuel they use for the daily commute. Many of these websites also include tips for increasing fuel efficiency, which can have the same benefits as anti-idling. Sharing these tips with the school community can help ensure that if parents, caregivers and school staff must drive, their vehicles will at least have less impact on the environment.

Illustrating how to use a vehicle more efficiently and considerately can help ensure that families intent on driving are still able to participate in an inclusive School Travel Plan. Such awareness materials can potentially be an ice-breaker to open conversations about reducing vehicle use. Even a small change in driving habits can have a great impact if multiple drivers take part.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

You can find some great information about carpooling online – check out www.carpool.ca and www.carpoolingnetwork.com for examples.

Many STP partner websites have anti-idling resources, such as BC's HASTE (www.hastebc.org/tools/anti-idling-cookbook) or Green Communities Canada's Active & Safe Routes to School website (www.saferoutestoschool.ca/downloads/guide/chapter4/revised_background_sheet-dec05.pdf).

Growing Support

Effective communication is an extremely important facet of any initiative looking to foster change. Getting the word out about School Travel Planning and advertising your Action Plan initiatives will help build support for the program and increase its chances of success. Ensuring your communications are as explicit, engaging and inclusive as possible will significantly help your plight.

The School Travel Planning toolkit contains a plethora of materials to help you build your communications plan. Press release templates, newsletter articles, fact sheets and multi-media presentations have all been designed to help you put together a media kit specific to your community.

Don't forget the power of images and illustrative techniques to build support and understanding for STP. Sharing a snapshot of a school's transportation profile at different points in time can effectively communicate how students get to school and where changes may be made to improve active travel numbers. One sharing tool is the Greening Tree, which is the focus of the following Community Case Study.

Know Your Audience

Make sure to address communications to the target audience. Include considerations such as appropriate reading level and language requirements in the communication plan.

Manitoba's STP program, for example, has translated the Family Survey into German, and further translations into Cree, Korean, Mandarin/Cantonese, Punjabi, Urdu/Pharsi, and Sinhalese are planned to reflect the local population.

Community Case Study

Waterloo, ON is Making the World Greener One Leaf at a Time

When the Active and Safe Routes to School Working Group in Waterloo, ON wanted to encourage students to walk or cycle to school, they decided to use a fun, visual prompt that would be easy for every grade level to understand. Taking some tips from a similar idea they found in their research, the group developed the Greening Tree.

The Greening Tree is an activity that assigns different coloured leaves to each method of getting to school: buff-coloured leaves for driving in a private vehicle, light green leaves for taking the school bus or transit, and dark green leaves for using active modes of transportation. When asked how they travelled to school on a particular day, each student receives a paper leaf whose colour corresponds to the method of travel the student used. The leaves are then attached to a paper trunk in a common area of the school for all to see. The greener the tree, the more active transportation is taking place at the school.



The Greening Tree goal is to grow darker green over time

One key to the success of the Greening Tree is the element of surprise – students (and their parents or caregivers) don't know the activity will be taking place until after they have arrived at school, which limits the chance of creating a "colour bias."

After the initial 'Greening Tree Day,' schools repeat the activity on at least one more randomly chosen day – again, with no warning to students and their families – in the hopes that the tree will be greener than it was the previous time around.

The Working Group also developed curriculum connections to accompany the initiative so that teachers could incorporate the Greening Tree into other classroom activities and promote its message in more detail.

More information about Waterloo's Greening Tree activity can be obtained by contacting the Active and Safe Routes to School Working Group at Together 4 Health (see www.together4health.ca/node/9/partners). The materials, including a step-by-step "how to" guide, can also be found online at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/programs.asp.

Effective communication isn't just about what you produce – ensuring you're on top of new initiatives and the latest STP-related information can help you deliver an even stronger program. Below, you'll find links to a few walking- and wheeling-focused communications that could help keep you in the know.

News to Peruse

The ***Walkolution News*** is a monthly e-newsletter produced by **Canada Walks** (www.canadawalks.ca) that focuses on newsworthy walking and walkability initiatives in Canada and beyond.

Centerlines (www.bikewalk.org/newslettersubscribe.php) is a US-based e-newsletter produced monthly by the National Centre for Biking and Walking (www.bikewalk.org).

The ***Fostering Sustainable Behaviour Newsletter*** is a periodic e-newsletter about the latest in Community-Based Social Marketing. To subscribe, send an email to web@cbsm.com with “subscribe newsletter” in the subject line.

And of course, check out regular editions of the ***School Travel Planning News*** at www.saferoutestoschool.ca/schooltravel.asp.

All-Weather Fun

Walking (and oftentimes wheeling) can be done year-round and in all types of weather if people are properly prepared. Rainy or snowy weather will sometimes make people hesitant to gear up and head outside for an active commute, but using active transportation in rainy or wintery weather can have benefits not realized on warmer, sunnier days: playing in the snow, splashing in puddles, the invigorating feeling of cool air on your face. Including all-weather initiatives in the Action Plan can help students and their families realize how fun it is to walk and wheel in all types of weather.

Of course, any all-weather promotion of walking and wheeling should include tips about **how to prepare for different climatic conditions**. Many schools already share information about how to dress for the season. Be sure that any outdoor initiative included in your Action Plan promotes dressing for the weather and seasonal conditions, including lower light at times of the year when the days are shorter.

In recent years, recognizing the need to promote active school travel year-round, many Active & Safe Routes to School programs added **Winter Walk Day** to their repertoire. Alberta was the first in Canada to officially kick off the initiative, and the history of their event is chronicled in the next Community Case Study.

Did You Know...

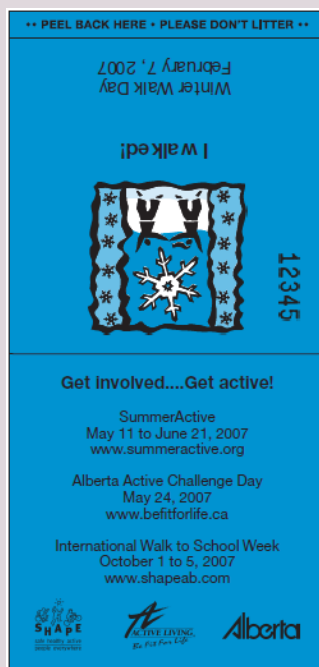
... a study featured in the January 2011 issue of Real Simple magazine revealed that cold temperatures have a more positive effect on your mood than warm temperatures. Walking in winter is good for your mental health!

Community Case Study

Students in Alberta Come Out of Hibernation for Winter Walk Day

In 2007, stakeholders in support of children's independent mobility in Alberta organized an event that would challenge the belief that it's just too cold to walk to school in the winter. Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE), the provincial Active & Safe Routes to School lead joined forces with local Be Fit for Life Centres and the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation to launch the first Winter Walk Day (WWD) on February 7th.

Piggybacking the event on the Public Health Agency of Canada's WinterActive initiative (now defunct), the three groups promoted WWD extensively to previous walking program participants and other related networks. Those who registered through SHAPE's website were sent additional information, as well as promotional "I Walked" ski tags to wear on their jackets. The event was further advertised through press releases, special events, and a student art contest to engage children and youth.



Winter Walk Day participants received promotional ski tags to put on their jackets

To boost interest in Winter Walk Day, SHAPE, Be Fit for Life and other partner groups provided incentive items such as stickers, wristbands, mitts, hats and awards to recognize participating schools. Organizers have also enjoyed the support of local politicians and a few Olympic athletes to help get the word out that walking in the winter can be fun while improving health, protecting the environment, reducing traffic, and building community.

For more information about Winter Walk Day and other STP initiatives in Alberta, check out SHAPE's website at www.shapeab.com. You can also contact SHAPE by email through the online contact form on their website, or by phone at 780.406.8530.

Another way to encourage walking and wheeling in all types of weather is to **provide weather-relevant incentives** and giveaways like umbrellas, woollen mitts and hats, reflective clothing or lights. Many of these items are available for bulk sale in the online IWALK store (www.mprusso.com/iwalk/).

Don't forget to **include all types of weather in the photos and images included in all STP communications**. One Action Plan item could be the collection of local images of students and their families walking or cycling in rainy, snowy, and dark conditions. An **all-weather photo contest** to encourage the school community to get outside and chronicle some experiences of their own could return a variety of great photos. A picture is worth a thousand words!

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Check out some of the STP partner websites for tips and pointers on all-weather AT:

Manitoba: <http://greenactioncentre.ca/2010/walk-to-school-in-winter/>

Nova Scotia: <http://saferoutesns.ca/index.php/event/winter-walk-day/>

Ontario: <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/winterwalkday.asp>

Counteracting convenience

When promoting active travel solutions, one of the greatest barriers faced by the STP team may be the notion of time and convenience. Single-parent families and families with both parents working outside of the home may feel that there's just not enough time to walk or wheel to school. Many families cite the convenience of dropping children off by car since they're already driving themselves to work.

"Convenience" and "being en route" were two of the top reasons for driving given relatively consistently across the country by participants in the 2009 Baseline and Follow-up Family Surveys. In some cases, however, **using active transportation can actually save time over driving**. Statistics gathered from a bike-sharing program in Lyon, France show that urban cyclists are able to get from point A to point B as quickly or even faster than the average driver, and that doesn't account for the time drivers spend looking for a parking space⁹.

Getting everyone to regularly commute by bike, however, could be quite an ambitious undertaking in Canada. Perhaps more Canadians would choose active travel if they knew how much it could contribute to their general well-being.

Sustainable happiness is a key component of School Travel Planning because walking or wheeling to school can have a positive effect on students' health and wellbeing (and that of their parents and caregivers as well). Tying in nicely with the sustainable happiness concept is the idea of **time affluence**. Tal Ben-Shahar, a Psychology instructor at Harvard University, defines time affluence as "the feeling that one has sufficient time to pursue activities that are personally meaningful, to reflect, to engage in leisure." On the flip side, time poverty is "the feeling that one is constantly stressed, rushed, overworked, and behind." Tipping the balance from time poverty to time affluence can seem tough if one is already time-strapped, but the key is to intentionally plan leisure time to include activities that are meaningful and beneficial. For example, rather than being lured into watching an extra television show by commercials, one could take some of that time to make lunches or plan breakfast for the next day, freeing up more time in the morning to walk or wheel to school. Ben-Shahar calls this "life mapping," and says it can help people re-prioritize their lives to allow more time for what they enjoy most, such as family time.

Promoting parental time affluence, then – and its positive effect on health and well-being – could be an effective counteraction to the argument that driving is convenient. Even if driving could get a family to school faster, budgeting one's time to walk or wheel instead could produce mental and physical benefits that far outweigh the convenience factor. **Celebrating the many other benefits of an active school commute** may also help to sway a few minds, such as more quality one-on-one time between parent and child, improved physical fitness, increased benefit to the environment, the chance to interact socially with other parents and caregivers, and the health and wellness benefits of time spent outside in the fresh air, to name a few.

An active commute to school breaks up time otherwise spent remaining sedentary. Periodic breaks in sedentary time throughout the day have been shown to be positively associated with health outcomes (such as body composition and cardiovascular health) in children and adults¹⁰.

Thinking Outside the Box

Sustainable happiness is a term that was coined by Dr. Catherine O'Brien, a professor at Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia. She defines the concept as "happiness that contributes to individual, community and/or global well-being and does not exploit other people, the environment, or future generations."

The concept merges principles from sustainability and happiness studies, encouraging individuals, communities and organizations to reflect on opportunities to leave a legacy of sustainable happiness.

Did You Know...

... there is a curriculum resource for Sustainable Happiness? The *Sustainable Happiness and Health Education Teacher's Guide* by Dr. Catherine O'Brien of Cape Breton University can be found at: <http://sustainablehappiness.ca/for-educators>. The guide includes lesson plans specific to the school journey.

In 2009, Nova Scotia's Active & Safe Routes to School program sought to refute the idea that busy people can't fit walking and wheeling to school into their schedules. By inviting time-strapped government officials to participate in Walk to School Day, they showed that even the busiest of people can benefit from taking part in active school travel. Read more about the initiative in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

Nova Scotian Members of the Legislative Assembly Walk the Talk

A trusted, credible source can cause more change than all the glossy posters in the world. For 2009's IWALK event, Nova Scotia's Active & Safe Routes to School program (ASRTS-NS) took this tenet to the streets by inviting local government officials to participate in the event.

MLAs from across the province were invited to accompany a child – their own, or one they knew – for the trip to school on Walk to School Day on October 5th. Nine representatives rose to the challenge, including Brian Skabar, MLA for Cumberland North, an area bordering the Northumberland Strait.

Mr. Skabar made the trek with his friend's daughter, Olivia, to Spring Street Academy in Amherst. His participation not only helped attract media attention to the event, but also allowed him to experience the benefits and barriers experienced by students who walk or wheel to school in his riding. As an added bonus, Mr. Skabar was also treated to a detailed account of the latest Barbie movie during the trip!



Cumberland North MLA Brian Skabar with his friend Olivia on Walk to School Day in Amherst, NS

Representatives from all three of Nova Scotia's legislative parties participated in the event. The media response was outstanding, but in addition to raising the profile of IWALK across the province, the personal walking experiences gained by the participating MLAs could positively influence decisions they make in the future that affect the ability of Nova Scotian students to safely use active transportation for the school run.

For more information about this and other STP initiatives in Nova Scotia, check out the province's Active & Safe Routes to School website at www.saferoutesns.ca. You can also contact ASRTS-NS by email through their website, or by phone at 902.442.5055.

Including Action Plan initiatives that aim to increase mindfulness, promote time affluence, and integrate the concept of sustainable happiness could help lower the convenience factor on parents' and caregivers' priority scale, potentially increasing the success of the STP program while boosting happiness and well-being in the school community at the same time.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Find out more about Sustainable Happiness and its ties to active school travel at www.sustainablehappiness.ca. You can also learn more about positive psychology and time affluence by viewing Tal Ben-Shahar's presentation on the science of happiness here: <http://forum-network.org/lecture/positive-psychology-science-happiness>, or by reading his book *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment*.

Active & Safe Routes at School

Programs for bussed students and those with limited mobility

This section of this guide will provide a bit more detail about how to integrate active travel at school into your Action Plan in an effort to include students who must be bussed or driven to school.

As mentioned earlier, implementing a **dedicated walking or cycling program at the school** is a great way to get bussed students or individuals with limited mobility involved in active travel initiatives. Coordinate a school-wide walk (or cycle, skateboard, or in-line skate) around the school grounds or gymnasium at recess or lunchtime, or arrange a trek along a nearby trail after school. Consider the abilities of any mobility-challenged students when planning the route, and be sure that students participating in these activities get credit towards any active school travel incentive program in place.

Walking and wheeling programs can also be brought into the classroom as a way to get all students involved. In-class activities such as the **Virtual Cross-Canada Walk** can help inspire all students to step it up. Using a wall map of Canada to keep track of students' progress, classes can tally up the number of kilometres walked or wheeled as a group each week and find their corresponding point on the map. Using the honour system to self-report activity works well for this type of initiative so that students can count their active treks to and from school, and other places they go, rather than only considering the trips they take as a group. Alternatively, each student can be outfitted with a pedometer and keep track of the number of steps they take each week; this is an excellent way to get families involved in the activity. Teachers could also tie this initiative in with subjects they cover as part of the curriculum.

Thinking Outside the Box

Whitehorse, YT's *École Whitehorse Elementary School* starts each day with a dedicated 20 minute walk around the school grounds – a part of the school day in which each and every student participates.

Thinking Outside the Box

A class at a school in Fredericton, New Brunswick expanded their unit on Canada to include a virtual climb of Mount Logan, climbing the stairs in front of the school until they amassed the distance that would theoretically take them to the summit.

More great ideas for in-class physical activity can be found in the *Public Health Agency of Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*. These resources are organized by age level (from age 6 to 14) and feature a variety of initiatives to get children and youth moving, providing guides for children, teachers, and families. The resources include "Gotta Move!" a physical activity magazine for children, and the "Let's Get Active!" magazine for youth.

When promoting alternative transportation choices to students, remember that public transit is another great option. Transit often involves walking some distance to get from home to the bus stop and again from the bus stop to school, and it's much healthier for the environment than driving in the family car. Transit trips can be combined with "Walk a Block" or "Park and Stride" programs that encourage students to get off the bus a couple of stops earlier and walk the rest of the way.

TransLink, the transit authority for Metro Vancouver in BC, helps make it easier for children and youth to choose transit during Walk to School Week through their "Kids Ride Free" program. Read more about it in the following Community Case Study.

Community Case Study

TransLink Lets Kids Ride Free

The International Walk to School campaign (IWALK) isn't just for students who are able to walk or wheel to school; it is also about finding other alternatives to driving in a private car. Since 2005, Metro Vancouver's transit authority, TransLink, has been committed to making alternative transportation options more available to all students during BC's Walk to School Week.

For the past six years, TransLink has offered free bus rides for all students during Walk to School Week. Secondary school students get a complementary fare when they show a GoCard (a school ID needed for reduced fares), whereas elementary students need no identification to score a free ride. The offer goes beyond buses to include the SkyTrain and the SeaBus as well, so students can travel the entire Metro Vancouver area.



Metro Vancouver's TransLink offers free transit rides to students during Walk to School Week

The offer isn't simply lip service: TransLink goes further to suggest that teachers take advantage of the fare-free week by taking their classes on field trips using transit. Teachers simply register their classes online (to help ensure against field trip-related bottlenecks). As an added bonus, registered classes are put into a draw to win TravelSmart coat tags for each student.

TransLink plans to honour this commitment during future IWALKs as well, making it that much easier for schools in Metro Vancouver to encourage their students to step outside the family car and try a new way of getting to school.

For more information about TransLink's Kids Ride Free program, check out their Walk to School Week "Buzzer Blog" post at <http://buzzer.translink.ca/index.php/2010/09/kids-ride-free-for-walk-to-school-week-oct-4-8-2010/>. You can also find out more about this and other TravelSmart initiatives by contacting the TravelSmart team at 604.216.3299, or by email at travelsmart@translink.ca.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Resources for many at-school activities can be found on Green Communities Canada's Active and Safe Routes to School website (www.saferoutestoschool.ca) under "Walking Programs".

You can also check out some of the STP partner sites for ideas, such as the Recreation and Parks Association of Yukon's "Active Yukon Schools Program" resource list: www.rpay.org/Schools/2006-07_Resource_List.pdf or Saskatchewan in Motion's new daily physical activity manual for teachers of students from kindergarten to grade 8: www.saskatchewaninmotion.ca/educators/daily-physical-activity-manual.

Download the Public Health Agency of Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth online at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/downloads-eng.php.

Enforcement

While positive reinforcement is the preferred route to foster change, laws are there for a reason, and having the right people on board to enforce those laws can be a welcome addition to any Action Plan. Issues such as speeding, failing to stop at crosswalks, and passing stopped cars can seriously infringe on student and community safety, and having the support of police, by-law officers, and other municipal staff is an important part of the STP equation. Enforcement can also be used to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are doing their part to keep the trip to school safe.

Thinking Outside the Box

Winnipeg's *Greenway School* offered motorists a wave of encouragement during its anti-speeding campaign: students held up placards spelling out "S-L-O-W-D-O-W-N," sending an innovative reminder to drivers.

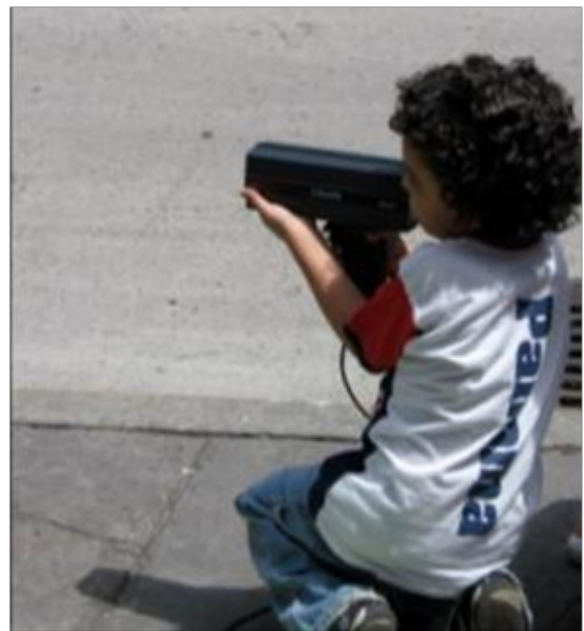
When launching an initiative to establish a safe stopping zone around the school grounds, for example, it can be useful to have **police or by-law officer presence** at "no stopping" areas to help urge drivers to kick the habit. The presence of law enforcement officers brings increased legitimacy to a traffic safety program by supplying messaging from a "credible source."

Enforcement measures can be implemented by STP champions as well. **Crossing guards** are a great example of civilian efforts to maintain safety and order while ensuring that everyone – motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike – obeys the rules of the road. When individuals are held accountable, by law enforcement officers or otherwise, they are more likely to adhere to social boundaries and expectations.

If your school community doesn't have a crossing guard program, or if parents and school staff feel that more crossing guards are required in the neighbourhood, you may be able to request a needs assessment. Adult crossing guard programs are usually implemented by school boards, police departments, or other municipal entities. Research how the initiative is coordinated in your community to determine who to contact. The process of determining whether a given intersection warrants the presence of a crossing guard can be quite detailed, and an assessment may take some time to complete.

Speed radar and computerized speed monitors are useful enforcement tools. Police services often respond to speeding complaints by setting up manned or unmanned speed monitors in a target area. These devices collect and log speed data over a period of time, which means "before" and "after" data can be gathered to support an anti-speeding campaign such as the Pace Car Program.

Schools can also complete their own traffic speed analysis. Speed radar guns are available for purchase online and are relatively easy to use and can be part of a youth engagement strategy. New York's "Liveable Streets Education" program offers an initiative that lets students measure the speed of vehicles near their school and ties their discoveries into classroom-based learning. In Alberta, SHAPE and the Alberta Automobile Association teamed up to purchase speed radar guns available for use by qualifying school communities.



An elementary student clocks traffic speed outside his school as part of New York City's *Liveable Streets Education* program.

Note: Be sure to research your community's laws and regulations before implementing any enforcement-related initiatives.

Policy Influencing Change

The School Travel Planning process can achieve sustainability not just at the local level through the provision of a single School Travel Plan document, but by facilitating meaningful policy development at the school district, municipal, provincial/territorial, or national level. For instance, an effective school board policy may encourage the safe and responsible use of bicycles or skateboards rather than allowing individual schools to ban their use. School boards could also implement idle-free zones around schools and bylaw enforcement may work with schools to create “no stopping” areas along sections of road adjacent to a school.

Some school boards involved in STP have developed excellent policies in support of active school travel. PL Robertson Public School in Milton, ON, for example, was officially decreed a “walking only” school since its opening in January 2010.

Some municipalities show their support of active travel for children and youth by making formal commitments through the creation of active travel policies. In Surrey, BC, City Council has adopted guidelines to promote child- and youth-friendly infrastructure improvements. You can view their Child and Youth Friendly City Strategy online at www.surrey.ca/plans-strategies/3191.aspx.

Where Do I Go For More Info?

Safe Kids' “Canada's Favourite Crossing Guard” program is highlighted here:

www.safekidscanada.ca/parents/safety-information/pedestrian-safety/crossing-guard/crossing-guards.aspx

Visit the Liveable Streets Education website for more information on the speed gun activity and other innovative ideas:

www.streetseducation.org.

Other Resources

Hopefully, the ideas, tips and initiatives in this guide have provided you with some insight and inspiration to help with the development of your school's Action Plan. There are far more local, national and international initiatives and resources than we could possibly cover here that may also inspire you. At www.saferoutestoschool.ca/tourtheworld.asp, you'll find a summary of some that may be of interest. Don't hesitate to do some of your own research to unearth ideas that aren't covered in this guide, or of course, create your own. Be sure to share your successes with us at info@saferoutestoschool.ca so you can inspire future STP Action Plans, too!

School Travel Planning's Partner Organization Websites

Alberta – Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE): www.shapeab.com

British Columbia – The Hub for Action on School Transportation Emissions (HASTE): www.hastebc.org

Manitoba – Green Action Centre, Active and Safe Routes to School program: www.greenactioncentre.ca

New Brunswick – The Lung Association of New Brunswick: www.nb.lung.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador – City of St. John's Department of Recreation: www.stjohns.ca/cityservices/recreation/index.jsp

Nova Scotia – Ecology Action Centre, Active & Safe Routes to School program: www.saferoutesns.ca;

Cape Breton University: www.cbu.ca

Northwest Territories – YK1 School District: www.yk1.nt.ca

Ontario – Green Communities Canada, Active and Safe Routes to School program: www.saferoutestoschool.ca;

The University of Toronto: www.utoronto.ca

Prince Edward Island – Recreation PEI: www.recreationpei.ca

Québec – Vélo Québec: www.velo.qc.ca/monecole/

Saskatchewan – Saskatchewan In Motion: www.saskatchewaninmotion.ca

Yukon Territory – The Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon: www.rpay.org

Reference List

1. Beesley, T, Faulkner, G., Buliung, R. and Kennedy, J. 2008. *School Travel Planning: A Canadian Pilot Evaluation*. 17 pp.
2. Engwicht, D. 2010. *Intrigue and Uncertainty: Towards New Traffic-Taming Tools*. 32 pp.
3. Kissell, J. May 18, 2005. Living Streets: Using uncertainty to calm traffic. *Interesting Thing of the Day* (<http://itotd.com/articles/553/living-streets/>).
- 4,5. Massey, R. February 13, 2008. Danger ahead! White lines on the road are more likely to make you crash. *Mail Online* (www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-513953/Danger-ahead-White-lines-road-likely-make-crash.html).
6. Hanavan, L. 2008. *Safety Education Programs Report and Recommendations*. 26 pp.
- 7, 8. *DriveWiser website*. 2009. Online at www.drivewiser.ca.
9. Alter, L. December 3, 2010. New Study Shows Urban Cycling Is Faster Than Driving. *Treehugger* (www.treehugger.com/files/2010/12/urban-cycling-faster-than-driving.php).
10. Healy, G.N., Dunstan, D.W., Salmon, J., Cerin, E., Shaw, J.E., Zimmet, P.Z., and Owen, N. 2008. Breaks in sedentary time: beneficial associations with metabolic risk. *Diabetes Care*, 31, 661-6.

Appendix 1: Community-Based Social Marketing and School Travel Planning

Like many modern programs that aim to create social change, School Travel Planning subscribes to the concept of Community-Based Social Marketing, or CBSM^{*}. Founded by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, CBSM emerged from research in social psychology that suggests the effectiveness of social and behavioural change initiatives is increased when they are delivered at the community level through direct contact with people. Simply advertising or providing information is not sufficient – one must do more than create awareness to foster real change.

CBSM includes a set of tools to help proponents of sustainable behaviour in their goal to transform the behaviour of their target audience. Used alone, each tool can help improve the success of such a campaign – used as a group, the toolkit has the potential to transform the way programs are delivered and to truly engage a greater audience. CBSM also offers guidance for the development and evaluation of programs to ensure they have a solid foundation and evolve when necessary; this process helped guide the development of Canada's School Travel Planning program.

Step 1: Identify Barriers and Benefits

The first step in the CBSM process – identifying the barriers and benefits for your target activity – is integral to School Travel Planning, and indeed to the development of an Action Plan. Until a school community's barriers to active transportation are identified, we can't know which STP interventions to apply to achieve the greatest benefit.

The results from the Baseline Family Survey are instrumental in identifying barriers to active school travel in the community. Other elements of data collection including Pedestrian/Cyclist/Traffic Counts, School Site Visits and Walkabouts, are also integral to gaining thorough knowledge of the barriers first hand. These tools will also shed light on the school community's attitude and behaviour in the face of those barriers. This type of qualitative information can help corroborate the Family Survey data and help the School STP Committee prioritize Action Plan items.

Step 2: Use Tools of Behaviour Change to Develop a STP Strategy

Various tools can be applied to behaviour change strategies to increase their effectiveness and longevity. These tools are inherent to the STP process and Action Plan initiatives.

Seek a commitment from the target audience. Research has shown that getting people to commit to an initiative can foster change by altering the way they see themselves, and by acting on their desire to be consistent. For instance, if someone commits to walking to school once per week, they often start to see themselves as a walker instead of a driver, and as such, they will have a desire to continue to walk so as not to counteract both their commitment and their newfound self-perception. These commitments need not be big; in fact, starting small (such as participating in International Walk to School Day) often makes people more agreeable to more significant commitments (such as walking to school one day each week) in the future.

The way a commitment is proclaimed can also have a significant effect on its outcome. Written commitments seem to have more staying power than verbal ones, as do those decreed in public and those obtained from structured groups (such as an established School Advisory Committee). It is ideal to obtain commitments through existing connection points like pre-existing school events, and to ensure the commitment is voluntary rather than coercive.

Use prompts to drive change. McKenzie-Mohr defines prompts as “visual or auditory aids which remind us to carry out an activity that we might otherwise forget.” Indeed, driving is ingrained as habit for many people – helpful reminders such as posters or street art can remind people to choose active transportation instead. To be most effective, prompts should be visible, easy to understand, positive, and in close proximity to where the action is to be taken.

* McKenzie-Mohr, D and Smith, W. 1999. *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada. New Society Publishers. 176 pp.

Pay attention to norms. Essentially, norms are the tendency of individuals to engage in the culture they witness around them. Of course, by this definition, norms are more effective when they are visible. The scene in front of the school during students' morning arrival lends clear clues about the community's transportation norms – if driving to school is the norm, people are less likely to use active transportation than if they see others walking and wheeling on a regular basis. Therefore, supporting a critical mass of AT users, and making sure they are visible, can help encourage others to join in. Reporting on how many students and their families are using sustainable forms of transportation, rather than advertising the rather negatively-oriented number of people who drive, will have a greater impact on increasing the use of AT. Personal contact also helps to internalize norms, so encouraging AT users to gather at the school or to travel in a group (i.e. by occasionally providing coffee stations for walkers, or through the promotion of Walking/Cycling School Buses) can help reinforce their positive behaviour.



Here's one example of a message that could use a little tweaking

Think about how you are communicating your message.

CBSM advises that good communications should be vivid, personal, non-threatening and concrete. Knowing your audience, and developing your communications to suit them, will also increase success. Using a message that outlines what folks would miss out on by not engaging in an activity will be more effective than telling them what they'll gain if they do engage – people always want what they don't have! Keep your message simple and easy to remember, and whenever possible, deliver the message in person (i.e. at school events rather than just in the newsletter). Having the message delivered by a credible source, such as a principal or a local, trusted councillor, will also help ensure more people take notice. Finally, don't forget to communicate successes to ensure the whole community knows the positive impact of their actions!

Use incentives as motivation. Incentives can be especially useful when participation is low, such as when the initiative is seen as an inconvenience (i.e. walking during inclement weather). It's important to put careful thought into an incentive before it is introduced, however; the incentive must be delivered in a timely fashion relative to the desired behaviour (for example, handing a child a jacket tag directly after he or she arrives at school using an active travel mode). The incentive must also not be so significant that the behaviour will cease if the incentive is removed. Choose an incentive that is appropriate and relative and, if possible, one that will help encourage the behaviour you want to promote, like giving attractive umbrellas to students who walk in rainy weather. Consider non-monetary incentives as well; for example, give a "Golden Shoe Award" to the classroom with the biggest percentage increase in AT use. This can be a budget-conscious way to inspire behaviour change.

Remove external barriers to active travel. Eliminating these barriers, where possible, can be quite beneficial; in the case of STP, this is where the Municipal STP Steering Committee can be invaluable. Missing sidewalks, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and sub-par bicycle storage all fit into this category. While changing these factors may be more of a long-term initiative, working to remove such external barriers can be an important piece of the STP puzzle.

Incentives for School Travel Planning

Did you know that there is a virtual store dedicated to active travel incentives? At www.mprusso.com/iwalk, you can purchase IWALK t-shirts, hats, and more!

Step 3: Test the Strategy

Step 3 of the CBSM plan was significant to the development of School Travel Planning in Canada. Before the current STP toolkit was completely developed and finalized, the process and resources were pilot tested in four Canadian provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Feedback gathered during the pilot phase helped prove the effectiveness of Canada's STP program.

Before a newly-developed initiative is implemented throughout a municipality, test it in a single school and tweak the process as required. The STP initiatives listed in this guide have already been used by other provinces and territories and beyond – see the case studies highlighted in the "Specific Actions" section to get a taste of certain initiatives that have occurred or are currently underway in other STP municipalities.

Step 4: Evaluate and Evolve

For any program to be truly effective, it must continually be evaluated and revisited. Each element of Canada's STP process is re-examined and adapted as the program grows and evolves. In the same vein, a School Travel Plan is never fully complete – it is meant to be a living document that changes with the culture of the school community. Action items that are completed will be celebrated and may be removed from the list and replaced by emergent items.

