



School Travel Planning

An Introduction for Professionals



Improving health and reducing traffic

Students get daily physical activity and reduce sedentary time when they regularly use active travel for the school journey. This helps improve quality of life through greater physical health, sharpened mental acuity, decreased stress and increased happiness. Also, fewer cars on the school journey and around the school gate improves air quality and reduces traffic chaos.

School Travel Planning (STP) brings community stakeholders together to devise detailed plans for making active travel a feasible choice for children. Action plans for individual schools are based on Travel Demand Management principles and include actions that benefit the school zone and whole communities that surround them.

Did you know?

Since 1960, the rate of children walking to school has decreased from close to 60% to less than 30%.

In the same time, rates of overweight/obesity in children have nearly doubled.

Statistically, an extra hour spent in a car per week translates to a climb in rates of obesity of 5%.

Part of the current strategy against overweight/obesity in children aged 5-11 years is to change sedentary behaviours and engage them in at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity.

One car in five travels less than one kilometre.

An average Kindergartener can walk one kilometre in ten minutes!

Communities good for children are good for all

If our communities are built with children in mind, they will be easily navigable by all people. Municipal STP Committees use the *Child and Youth Friendly Land Use and Transport Planning Guidelines (Guidelines)* to inform the process of finding solutions to active travel barriers in an effort to create child-friendly spaces.

The document includes 19 guidelines with two main goals.

- Reducing automobile travel by children and youth.
- Reducing road traffic near children and youth.

Additionally, each guideline is designed to move transport and land-use towards sustainability, which corresponds with the environmental values that School Travel Planning was founded upon.

The full *Guidelines* document is available in versions for most Canadian provinces and territories at www.kidsonthemove.ca.

Walkable communities are happier communities

We are beginning to see a global shift away from measuring success by financial gain. In July, 2011, the United Nations unanimously passed a resolution on happiness to explore the idea of using happiness indicators to measure nations' success as opposed to the now-standard Gross Domestic Product.

What we know for certain is that we can produce spaces and places that contribute to greater personal, community and global well-being, and that walkable communities are happier communities, and happier

communities are healthier. For more on the connection between walkability and happiness, please visit www.sustainablehappiness.ca.

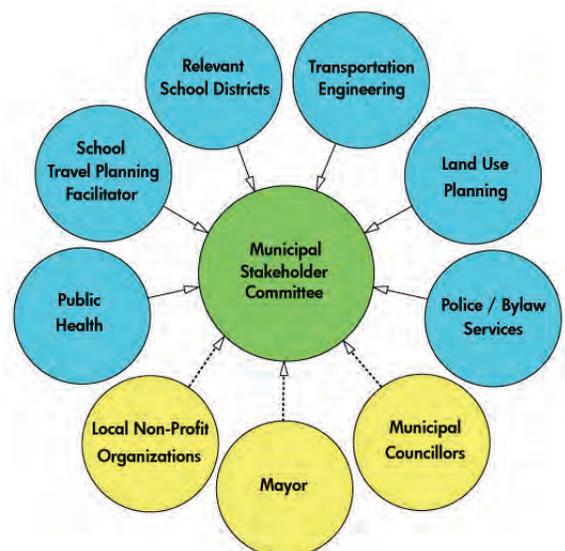


Reaching your departmental goals, collaboratively

The STP process works best with a Municipal Stakeholder Committee that includes any party with an interest in the school journey, including transportation engineering professionals, land use planners, police, school administration and planners, public health representatives, and councillors or mayors.

In our experience, participants value the experience of being part of the Municipal Stakeholder Committee because it is an effective working group and a way to build interdepartmental relationships that serve the community in many ways. Participants recognize the role their individual departments hold in the successful implementation of actions that encourage more children to walk and bike, and all members deal with any limitations together.

Similar working groups exist at the school level consisting of the principal, teachers, parents, students and possibly school administration or community advocates. These are the people who can best identify the barriers of a particular school community and they often come up with great solutions for some of the barriers.



Did you know?

Children are more vulnerable to air pollution when they play in city parks and schoolyards near high traffic areas.

Effects include aggravation of asthma (more hospital emergency visits); increase in respiratory symptoms in children; longer-lasting infections; lowered lung function in children; and increased sickness rates (more school absences).

The poor and disadvantaged in our society may be more at risk as they often live in neighbourhoods close to major highways and industry.

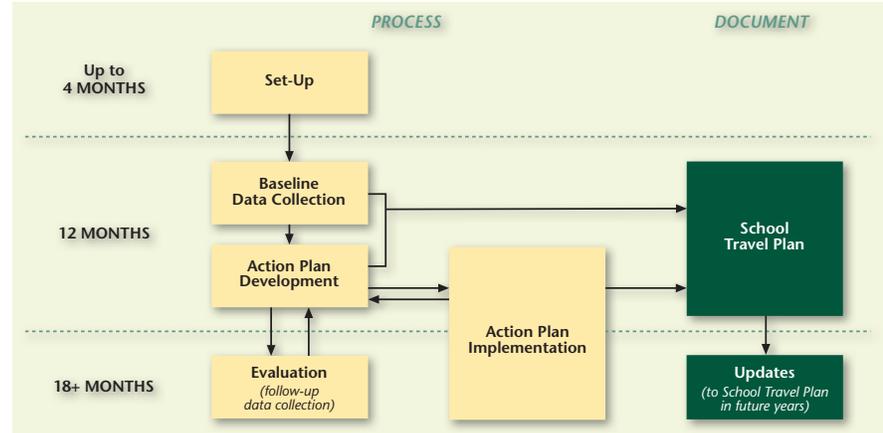
You can plant trees to fight air pollution; their leaves trap airborne particles, which are then washed away by the rain. And beautification of neighbourhoods adds to the joy of walking to school!

High traffic volumes and difficult street crossings have been found to significantly reduce the likelihood of children walking and cycling the school journey, and therefore supportive built environment features (e.g., traffic calming, safe crossings) around schools may encourage more students to use active travel.

A simple, flexible process that works

A School Travel Planning Facilitator coordinates the collection of information at the school level and makes it easy for municipal-level stakeholders to give input towards action items that will encourage greater use of active transportation for the school journey. These action items are unique to each participating school and are included in a School Travel Plan. Action items aim to educate citizens while also pooling community resources efficiently. The STP process flows through five phases:

School Travel Planning process



School Travel Planning in Canada

Municipal Stakeholder Committees have been established across the nation through two pilot projects spearheaded by Green Communities' Canada Walks. These projects have refined best practices resulting in a complete School Travel Planning toolkit that makes it easy to implement this flexible process in communities like yours.

In addition to the toolkit, Canada Walks publishes a School Travel Planning newsletter and conducts many webinars to share new knowledge and practices across sectors on a national scale.



A few School Travel Planning successes



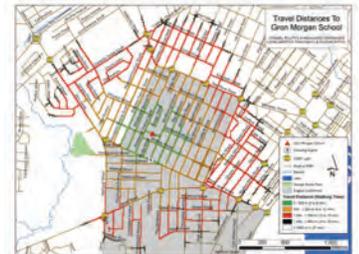
Walking School Buses



Reduced speeds in some school zones



Exciting walking events



GIS mapping that includes information like traffic controls and level of slope for best cycling/walking routes to school



Walking buddy systems



Beautiful slow-traffic streets



Barrier walls protecting children from cars



Parking lot safety measures